3D CARD ROUND-UP

PCZONE

THE FIRST AND BEST PC GAMES MAG

COMMAND & CONQUER:
GENERALS

A new dimension for the biggest name in RTS

WORLD EXCLUSIVE

RAINBOW SIX:
RAVEN SHIELD

The stunning sequel, powered by the next-gen Unreal Warfare engine

COUNTER-STRIKE:
CONDITION ZERO

Exclusive playtest of the single-player sequel

PLUS...

NO ONE LIVES FOREVER 2
TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3
THE ITALIAN JOB

FIRST REVIEW

FREEDOM FORCE

Superhero action from the developers of System Shock 2

TINY COMPO: What is the full name of the second game in the *Rainbow Six* series?

IF YOUR COVERMOUNT IS MISSING PLEASE CONSULT YOUR NEWSAGENT

PREVIEW

FREELANCER

This could be the best space sim ever

www.pczone.co.uk

All Hell's Broken Loose

Launches April 2002

Assemble and control a party of up to eight heroes as you battle your way through the expansive 3D fantasy world of Ehb. In this action packed adventure, you and your party of fighters, archers and sorcerers will embark on a quest to take revenge on the evil that has engulfed your land. Whether you're playing alone or in multiplayer mode, you will seamlessly journey from the highest mountains and deepest dungeons, to enormous castles and secret underground lairs without experiencing a single loading screen. Seek out and destroy the source of the evil uprising that has torn the Kingdom of Ehb apart and victory will be yours. An epic adventure unfolds...

A Role-Playing Game from Chris Taylor

contents →

No news is good news

Computer games are, in the main, ignored by mainstream journalists, who are too busy reporting on the fact that the Queen Mother managed to make it to her mini-bar unaided. Every now and again though, they hit the headlines and without exception they're the villains of the piece. Remember the aftermath of September 11, when a few 'bright' sparks decided there was a link between the tragedy and the ultra-realistic *Flight Sim* software from Microsoft?

Then everything went quiet, until the *News Of The World* ran out of tittle-tattle and decided to throw its investigative weight into exposing a hitherto little-known modification called *Day Of Defeat*. As a game that is "helping to make Nazism acceptable", the authors were roundly vilified and a Labour MP was sucked in to give the piece a whiff of respectability, before the good old *NOTW* forgot about games again in order to concentrate on raking celebrity mud.

A further four weeks of blissful silence ensued until the phones started ringing again. In the space of one working day we had to field about 12 calls from tabloid journalists, local scandal rags and even someone from the BBC World Service. The reason? *Hooligans: Storm Over Europe* had just secured a distribution deal, meaning the game that hit number one in the Dutch charts (surely a solid argument for not relaxing the laws on cannabis) is now on sale over here.
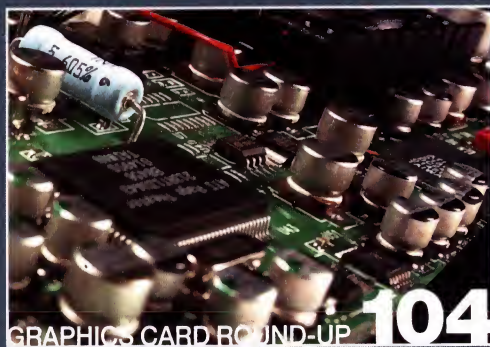
I explained that we hadn't seen the game and weren't interested in making comments for pieces that are only going to serve to provide oxygen for a title that doesn't deserve it. I'm not making any moral judgement on the game here – I personally couldn't care less – I just happen to think that there are great games out there that are ignored because valuable column space is given over to tat like this.

Such as Jedi Knight II. We finally got our review code this month and we're more than pleasantly surprised with what we've seen – check out Richie's review on page 68. Now I'm betting the remainder of this month's wages that no-one phones me up to ask me for a quote on a piece they're running about a stunning technical accomplishment, one of the finest pieces of electronic entertainment this year and the best *Star Wars* shooter to date. Where's the story in that?

Dave Woods
Editor

RAINBOW SIX: RAVEN SHIELD P34

IMAGINE WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF THE WORLD'S FAVOURITE TACTICAL ACTION SERIES WAS POWERED BY THE PC'S MOST ADVANCED 3D ENGINE. WELL IMAGINE NO LONGER... TOM CLANCY AND UNREAL WARFARE ARE IN LOVE

COVER DISCS P124

■ **12 PLAYABLE DEMOS INCLUDING...**
Bridge Commander, Warrior Kings, Star Wars: Starfighter, C&C: Renegade

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Day Of Defeat 2.0 for Half-Life, Tac Ops for Unreal Tournament and more...

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■ Contents differ between the CDs and the DVD. Check the disc pages for more details

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JEDI KNIGHT II: JEDI OUTCAST **68**

FREELANCER **60**

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FREEDOM FORCE **72**

TOP STORY

Life's a bitch and then Jedi...

STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER BioWare
PUBLISHER Activision
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Spring 2003
WEBSITE www.lucasarts.com/products/swkotor

IN SUMMARY

Set 4000 years before the films against the background of an epic conflict between Jedi and Sith, this is a stunning 3D RPG that doesn't skimp on detail and depth of gameplay.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

Are you kidding? *Baldur's Gate II* was beardily brilliant, but imagine how much better it would be with Jedis, Wookiees and gorgeous 3D graphics. This could be a new golden age for *Star Wars* games.

This is the RPG you're looking for
■ **SITH VICIOUS** Mark Hill
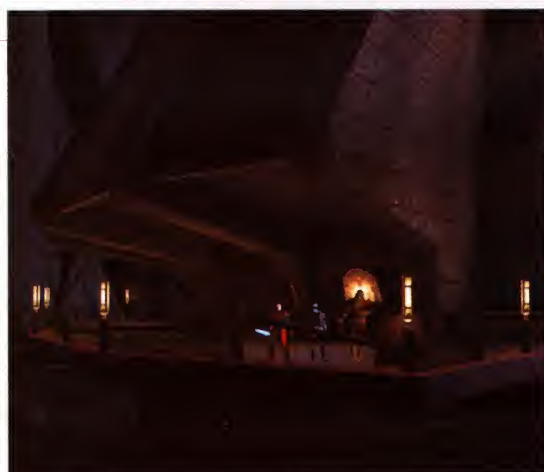
If these screenshots are anything to go by, the game is several graphical strides ahead of BioWare's other forthcoming RPG, *Neverwinter Nights*.
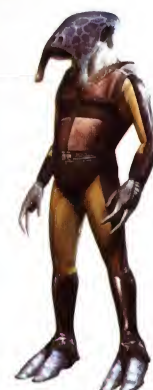
WHILE THE WHOLE world has been getting excited – and rightly so – about Verant's amazing online RPG *Star Wars Galaxies*, BioWare has been quietly toiling away at "the other" most exciting *Star Wars* game ever devised.

Playing a Wookiee potter or working in a Tattooine light saber shop is all very well, but *Knights Of The Old Republic* will have something that *Galaxies* won't: a marvellous single-player story set in a world designed solely for you to explore, and with so much depth you'll need to depressurise after playing it. At least that's what we're hoping. The story is set 4000 years before the films, when there were thousands of Jedi and thousands of Sith warriors, charging through the universe like light-sabered samurai.

In typical AD&D mode, you create a main character before going off questing with a party of adventurers of differing skills and personalities. The classes available include soldier, scoundrel, scout and, more promisingly, bounty hunter or Jedi guardian. There's also a choice of three different races. By far the most interesting idea

though, is that your actions throughout the game will take you closer to the light or dark side of the Force, echoing *Planescape: Torment*'s ground-breaking character development system.

Combat is also set to reprise the *Baldur's Gate* tradition of real-time fighting with the option to pause while you select tactics, use objects and special powers. Of course the 3D engine will take all this to another level both tactically and visually, with Jedi versus Sith battles featuring the full acrobatic treatment.

The only bad news is that the game will be appearing on Xbox first, this autumn, with the PC version planned for the following spring (partly so as not to clash with the release of *Galaxies*). We just hope that doesn't mean they'll sacrifice the rich detail and vast immersion we've come to associate with *Baldur's Gate*. It may be that we gain something into the bargain, as *Knights* will feature an old favourite in console

"A story with so much depth you'll need to depressurise after playing it"

RPGs – mini-games – like racing swoop bikes and manning laser turrets. And to give you an idea of the scope, we can tell you that there are ten worlds to quest through (including Tatooine, the Sith world, the Jedi Academy and the Wookiee homeworld Kashyyyk), each teeming with life, power struggles, NPCs and unique objects. As if that weren't enough, you'll be travelling between those worlds in an ancestor of the beloved Millennium Falcon.

Considering that the game world strays far, far away from the designs of the films, it's remarkable how close to the spirit of *Star Wars* it all looks. It's exactly as you would imagine it would be 4000 years BL (Before Luke). In fact, the architecture, the droids and the costumes are all much more aesthetically satisfying than those in *Episode I*, right down to the primitive R2 units.

What else can I say? After seeing the potential of this title it's gone straight into second position in my most wanted list – right after *Deus Ex 2*. **PCZ**

100/100

97/100

closed!

Send

Calling all heroes...

ASHERON'S CALL 2

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Turbine Entertainment
PUBLISHER Microsoft
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Christmas 2002
WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/games/PC

IN SUMMARY

The sequel to one of the biggest MMORPGs around, *Asheron's Call 2* subtly reworks the classic RPG gameplay of the original title and takes it to all new levels of visual splendour. Unprecedented power to affect the world around you is also promised.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

Apart from looking very smart indeed, the most exciting thing about this sequel is the potential to interact with and change the nature of the game world. Alter landscape, affect the overarching storyline, create a new settlement, and then destroy it all with a well-timed earthquake – *AC2* could be the next stage in persistent world gaming.

Asheron called, wonders why you never call him back
■ **CLEAN SHAVEN** Anthony Holden

TOP STORY
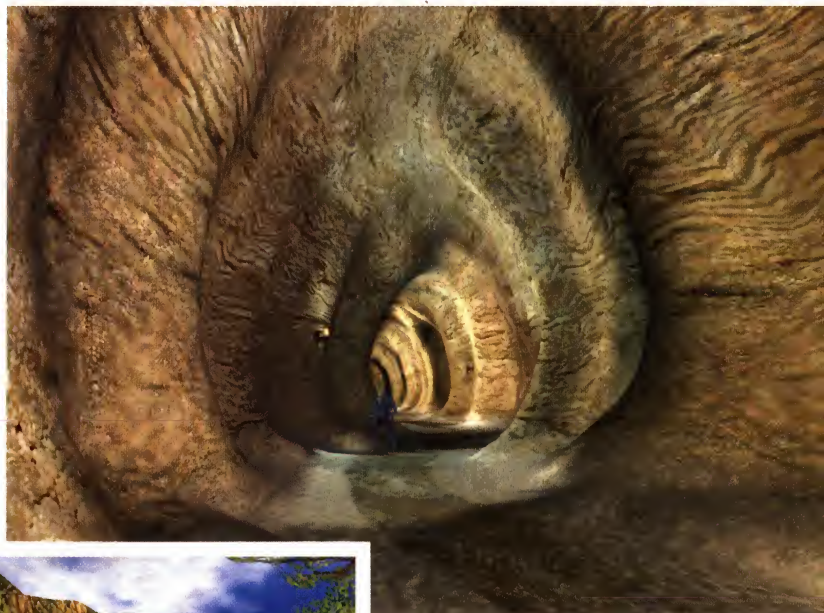
Existing *Asheron's Call* players won't be able to transfer their characters to *AC2*, but there is a chance that, if you've made a big enough name for yourself in *AC*, your character will be incorporated into the legends and lore of the sequel.

"Players will be able to instigate disasters such as volcanic eruptions and blizzards"

THE VERY CONCEPT of a sequel to a persistent world game is a strange one. Quite plainly, one of the key strengths of MMORPGs is that they are continually developed; growing in size and richness all the time by way of expansion packs, engine tweaks, and limitless player feedback. To throw all this away and start from scratch frankly seems a little idiotic, smacking of fat senior management types too busy playing grab-ass with the secretary to see past their blinkered sequel mindset.

Let's not get carried away though. In fact, let's give this crazy idea a chance, as there's plenty of evidence to suggest that Microsoft's recently unveiled *Asheron's Call 2* is a lot more than just a cynical cash-in. It could even be the game that finally delivers on the broken promises of massively multiplayer and propels the form into the next generation.

VITAL STATISTICS

Before we get to that though, a few vital stats. Hugely evolved in some areas, *Asheron's Call 2* will nevertheless be very much recognisable to existing *AC* fans

(and if you're wondering: yes, the original game will still be made available if enough people keep playing it). The setting, storyline, alignment system and basic rules of the original game will remain intact, but thrown hundreds of years forward in time. A great magical cataclysm has left the world of Dereth torn and ruined, and along with the usual fighting, party questing and trade, it's up to players to rebuild their shattered land.

MAKING YOUR MARK

Emerging from safe havens below ground are three unique playable races, all sharing an uneasy truce. Humans are specialists in ranged combat, the new Tumeroks are magic specialists and the brawny Lugians are best suited to brawling outside the local pub on a Saturday night. Combat itself is also to be fully reworked, with a greater choice of moves, more tactical options and a lot less repetition.

Then there's the new engine. It's called Turbine Engine G2, and as you'd expect it's a veritable bag of graphical tricks. Real-time shadows and lighting, highly detailed

character models, realistic shimmery-reflective water, foliage that sways in the wind – it may even give *Star Wars Galaxies* a run for its money.

But where things really get interesting is in the dynamic and constantly evolving nature of the world. According to Microsoft, players will actually be able to help restore the world of Dereth by creating new settlements, interacting with the environment and "genuinely affecting the landscape and story of the world."

Equally, the landscape will be subject to further damage from disasters such as volcanic eruptions and blizzards, and players will even be able to instigate such events themselves once they've attained sufficient power.

This hugely refreshing level of player control extends throughout the design of the game – master craftsmen can fashion powerful magical items, weapons can be melted down and reforged… the list goes on. Coupled with stunning graphics and shrewdly streamlined gameplay, *Asheron's Call 2* could be set to make *EverQuest* look positively medieval. **PCZ**

▲ It's not often that common sense prevails in this world, but on March 4 a US federal judge dismissed the so-called Columbine lawsuit. The US$5 billion suit had been filed against 25 entertainment companies including id Software, Nintendo, Sony and, bizarrely, Atari, by the families of victims shot in the 1999 Columbine massacre. All because, of course, the gunmen played violent videogames.

Though not a crazed killer, I too am a fan of violent videogames. Lately I've been enjoying *Jedi Knight II*, in which you can decapitate your foes as well as slice them clean in two. Admittedly it's all quite neat and cauterised, but the principle is in essence no different from the more grisly violence of id's games or *Soldier Of Fortune II*.

The simple fact is that many games do contain violence and gore that may seem gratuitous to some, and what's more we thoroughly enjoy it. Not because of some sort of primitive blood lust or juvenile taste for the obscene (though these things certainly exist), and not because we're potential killers, but because it enhances the gaming experience. For one, it's a prime example of the amplified sense of input/response that forms one of the principle pleasures in games. Plus, in the increasingly realistic environments of modern games, a lack of realistic violence would jar. Perhaps games like *SOFII* take this principle to a somewhat unnecessary extreme, but that's more a matter of taste. I'm sure if I sat down I could come up with some other arguments, but right now I'm busy light-sabering the heads off some sneaky Greedo lookalikes.

▼ Now go read some news.

Microsoft shows its hand

Beer and loafing in Las Vegas, at the International Games Festival

There was plenty worth looking at in Vegas, but no *Halo*.

THE EVENT FORMERLY known as Gamestock took place at the end of February in a Las Vegas nightclub. Gamestock was Microsoft's annual press jolly in Whistler, Canada, where games journalists from around the world would converge at Bill Gates's expense, get drunk, and glance occasionally at games between sliding down a snow-capped hillock.

With last year's event hijacked by Xbox, it was decided to relocate to Sin City for a PC-only affair, the hope being that with no mountains to distract, the assembled hacks would get stuck into a veritable feast of interactive PC entertainment.

As clearly evident from the lack of extreme sports titles and Xbox logos, the Big M had chosen this, their inaugural International Games Festival (IGF), to emphasise their commitment to the PC as a games platform. Their rather transparent manoeuvring was later reinforced by Microsoft's director of Windows Third Party Gaming, Ted Hase, in a woolly speech on the 'Windows Gaming Ecosytem', the entire 45 minutes of which can be summed up with the phrase: 'Windows isn't perfect, but we're getting there.'

Thankfully the speeches were short, certainly in terms of offering any concrete glimpse at Microsoft's PC strategy for the future. As to the games we'll see in the next year, it was a typically mixed bag. First off, there was no *Halo*. The flagship Xbox game, despite starting life on PC three years ago, is still under wraps and the only way you're going to get to play it is to shell out £300 for a Xbox, unless of course a half-decent emulator appears before next summer. They did at least put some rumours to rest by confirming the game for an eventual PC release. But don't hold your breath.

To its credit, however, Microsoft pulled out all the stops on other titles, rolling out latest code for *Age Of Mythology*, *Impossible Creatures* and *Freelancer*, showing off *Asheron's Call 2* and *Links 2003* for the first time and announcing two new games: *Combat Flight Sim 3* and *Rise Of Nations*. Add-on packs for *MechWarrior 4* and *Zoo Tycoon* made up the numbers.

The games, the best ones anyway, are covered over the next few pages, along with a special look at *Asheron's Call 2* on page 12, and full preview of *Freelancer* on page 60. Alongside *Age Of Mythology*, the latter game definitely rated as equal best on show.

At the end of the day though, Microsoft's IGF could only rank second best against the host city Las Vegas. Twenty-four-hour gambling and drinking soon takes its toll, though, and we headed home to Blighty as we left it, still hankering after *Halo* but safe in the knowledge that Microsoft was still creating PC games, some great, others not so great.

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A forgotten gem returns to life

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Two tactical shooters face off

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Recycling the industry's trash

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Latest charts and release dates

VirtualCockpitView

Living in Sim

Combat Flight Sim 3 drifts into RPG territory

OF THE TWO new titles unveiled at Microsoft's recent Vegas bash, *Combat Flight Simulator 3* was undoubtedly the most arresting. Graphically striking and feature-packed, it proved a surprise festival hit even among erstwhile flight sim detractors.

Once again, *Combat Flight Sim 3* takes place in that endlessly sim-able theatre, the war over Europe in WWII, this time focusing on the years from 1943 to 1945. Borrowing RPG elements from the award-winning *B-17: The Mighty 8th*, *CFS3* promises a squadron leader system whereby players can plan missions, either online or off. You'll have to monitor the wellbeing of your character throughout a campaign, taking into account a range of factors such as g-force tolerance, vision and overall health, any of which can affect your ability to pilot a plane.

A total of 18 aircraft are represented in the game, including US, German and RAF examples, though the thriving flight sim community should ensure that this roster becomes exhaustive before too long. As the game is set in the latter stages of the war, you'll also be able to take wing in some of the first jet-engined war machines.

As you'd expect, the game boasts a gorgeous new graphics engine, now capable of rendering far more detailed terrain. The action has shifted to slightly lower altitudes as a result, with more in the way of high-speed tactical bombing runs and close air-support missions.

As with forthcoming rival *Jane's Attack Squadron*, *CFS3*'s multiplayer allows you to jump into gun emplacements or the bombardier's seat while your buddy handles the stick. Smartly enough, Microsoft has also promised some persistent servers to support the multiplayer game, almost taking the franchise into massively multiplayer territory.

Combine all this with incredible 3D modelling and visual splendour to match *IL-2 Sturmovik*, and it's clear that *CFS3* will set new standards when it takes off later this year.

Microsoft • ETA Autumn 2002 •
www.microsoft.com/games/PC

The online options allow you to set up ongoing multiplayer campaigns, as well as fight on Microsoft's own persistent campaign servers, to be modelled around actual WWII battles.

Mind like a Civ

Ex-*Civ* designer goes real-time, with *Rise Of Nations*

See the entirety of human history unfold in under an hour.

Is it an attempt to remake *Civ* for the mainstream?

THE 'OTHER' NEW title announced by Microsoft at February's IGF event was epoch-spanning RTS *Rise Of Nations*. It's the debut project for Big Huge Games, the new development outfit set up by Brian Reynolds, who played second fiddle to Sid Meier on the *Civilisation* series. And as it happens *RoN* can best be described as a a real-time version of *Civ*, or a 2D *Empire Earth*.

Kicking off in the Stone Age, Brian's new game offers a now familiar whistle-stop journey through the history of civilisation, culminating in the modern age. With just a pile of rocks and a grubby cave under your control at the outset, it's up to you to develop an economy, expand your territory and race through the tech tree of life until you're sufficiently advanced to drop a nuke on someone. Apparently it's possible to win the game through military, economic or diplomatic means, but more likely a combination of the three.

Needless to say you'll be able to lead over a dozen civilisations, including Bantu, French, and Korean, and unlock a massive list of weaponry ranging from rocks and slings to stealth bombers. And although it looks uncannily like *Age Of Empires*, the graphics engine is much more capable in terms of detail and animation.

Of slightly more interest is the novel concept of territory in the game. Rather than fixed national borders, each player has a 'sphere of influence' that expands and contracts according to the size and placement of cities and the nature of the buildings within them. The game also offers an advanced combat system with an impressive range of strategic options including strategic use of terrain and various camouflage techniques. The developers also claim that, in contrast to *Civ*, you can finish an entire game in an hour or so if you choose.

Whether these few innovations will be enough to distinguish *Rise Of Nations* is difficult to gauge from the brief hands-on we had with the game, but at this stage the promise is definitely there.

Big Huge Games • ETA Q2 2003 • www.microsoft.com/games/PC

Bedroom golf

On the back nine with *Links 2003*

Bringing new meaning to the concept of sand traps.

Pretend to play golf in a tropical paradise. You sad twat...

"A bunch of real-life pros will be featured, along with six new championship courses"

THE LINKS SERIES is one of the longest-running sports franchises around, having begun its days at Access Software more than a decade ago. It's gained one or two fans along the way, so it comes as no surprise that Microsoft is busy creating *Links 2003*. While not *PC ZONE*'s favourite way to whack virtual golf balls around a screen, the *Links* franchise has always offered plenty of depth and polish, and the regular updates generally offer a decent helping of new features. This time, then, you can expect massively sharpened visuals, so much so that you can see the individual rake-marks in the bunkers; character models will be 3D for the first time, and all course objects will cast a shadow (including those in courses imported from previous versions of *Links*). A bunch of real-life pros will also be featured, along with six new championship courses and new multiplayer modes, including a play-by-email option.

Microsoft • ETA Q4 2002 • www.microsoft.com/games/PC

Yet another Microsoft game trying to capture a casual gaming audience.

Combine and conquer

Play God in particularly perverse fashion, in Relic's new RTS *Impossible Creatures*

DESPITE HAVING ONLY released one game in its five-year history, Vancouver-based Relic Entertainment is one of the most respected RTS developers around, perhaps because its groundbreaking debut *Homeworld* was a game of sheer genius. In spite of this, we've always been rather sceptical about its soon to be released second effort, as the concept behind it is both unconventional and a little over-ambitious. However, the more we see of *Impossible Creatures* (previously known as *Sigma: The Adventures Of Rex Chance*), the more we realise it's a simple 3D RTS at heart after all, with an intuitive core that may just win over the mass-market.

Set in a pulp fictional, Indiana Jones-esque 1937, the game sees you battling a crazed genetic scientist across a string of 12 distinctive South Pacific islands. A straightforward mission-based affair, the single-player campaign puts you through all the standard RTS motions: build a base, gather resources, wage war and advance your technological capabilities.

But then there's the twist, and it's a big one. Instead of unlocking and massing a pre-determined set of units, you create your own by crossbreeding the 50-odd real-world creatures on the islands into hybrid forms, with literally hundreds of thousands of potential combinations possible. Each new creation will display the principal attributes of the original creatures – an elephant-vulture will be strong as well as able to fly, a monkey-lemming will be able to burrow as well as climb trees, and so on ad infinitum. What you end up with is a system that is at once endlessly playable as well as extremely intuitive, and, we can only hope, ridiculous amounts of fun.

Relic • ETA June • www.relic.com/ product/impossiblecreatures

Ahh, death and destruction – it's a normal RTS after all.

Battle shy

It's official: The Bitmap Brothers started *World War II*

The scale should be suitably epic.

Showing off the power of the new AI, a bunch of units cower out of sight.

COWARDS ARE THE forgotten miscreants of gaming, but all that's about to change with The Bitmap Brothers' latest real-time strategy epic. Currently being developed under the working title of *World War II* and due for release by Codemasters this autumn, it will be the first RTS to boast real-time morale.

Using a revolutionary new AI engine known as the Frontline system, units in the game will display everything from heroism to confidence, despair and of course, the finest brown-trouser cowardice you could ever wish for. So, instead of sending a bunch of emotionless drones into combat, you'll get to control an entire army of neurotics. It's kind of like *Dad's Army* but on a PC.

"With the Frontline system, this game will be the first action-RTS to deliver a true recreation of the battlefield experience; the first to portray the psychology of warfare, rather than the sterile theory of 'war gaming'," claims The Bitmap Brothers' managing director Mike Montgomery.

As the title suggests, *World War II* will feature campaigns and missions based upon WWII's most significant battles, including Operation Market Garden and the Battle Of The Bulge. The 3D engine looks a bit tasty too, looking rather like a new version of that used in the sadly overlooked *Z: Steel Soldiers*.

We expect a lot from The Bitmap Brothers in terms of humour and gameplay, so look out for a major preview soon.

The Bitmap Brothers • ETA Autumn 2002 • www.bitmap-brothers.co.uk

New improved formula

Geoff Crammond returns for a fourth lap of the Grand Prix circuit

Attention to detail of serial killer proportions

Realism is key to a Crammond simulation.

WITH THE FORMULA One season back in action, we were fortunate enough to recently attend a press gathering for the latest entry onto the F1 simulation starting grid – *Geoff Crammond's Grand Prix 4*.

The biggest noise being made by developer Simergy seemed to concern the inclusion of highly accurate GPS-enhanced tracks. True, every F1 game that turns up boasts realistically modelled circuits, mapped to within an inch of their life, but a brief hands-on with the game proved a revelation, both in terms of world detail and car handling. If Crammond's previous games are known for one thing, it's realism, and *Grand Prix 4* doesn't look like it's going to disappoint in that respect.

The biggest complaint levelled at F1 games is that they're for the petrol-heads only, too complex for beginners to understand. Simergy has taken this into account with the in-game Gpedia – a step-by-step reference guide to understanding everything about the F1 world, from adjusting your gear ratios to spraying the champagne. It's a nice touch, and one that the developers are hoping will attract a less hardcore audience to the genre.

Sadly there aren't any major Internet options, although this is more to do with the FIA's curious (and slightly draconian) restrictions than laziness on the developer's part. So far GP4 looks nothing short of amazing and we'll have a more in-depth preview for you next month.

Simergy • ETA June • www.grandprixgames.com

Star Wars Clone

Galactic Battlegrounds fights on in
Clone Campaigns

AS PREDICTED IN our *Galactic Battlegrounds* review in issue109, LucasArts is to release an expansion pack for its RTS high-flyer based on Mr Lucas' virtually unheard of new arthouse sci-fi flick, *Attack Of The Clones*.

Fourteen spanking new scenarios will apparently capture the grandeur and atmosphere of the epic battles featured in the new film. Obviously we'd love to provide a more detailed explanation of this, but typically LucasArts has yet to clarify who's actually involved in these showdowns or indeed, why they're even fighting.

What we can reveal however is that the missions will introduce two brand new races as well as environments from the film and 200 new units including a selection of never-before-seen vehicles. The new units and civilisations will also be fully interwoven into the multiplayer game

thus allowing you to pitch new weird and wonderful faces against older and presumably furrier ones.

"*Clone Campaigns* gives us an opportunity to incorporate compelling new *Star Wars: Episode II* content with improvements in the gameplay, much of which was gleaned from the tremendous feedback received from the player community over the past few months," says LucasArts director of product marketing, Tom Byron.

Of course, it also gives LucasArts the perfect opportunity to cash in on the release of the new film with minimum effort and resources involved. Easy money? We'll let you know.

**LucasArts • ETA May •
www.lucasarts.com**

$4,000,000 through a traffic jam

The Italian Job

12th April

LGW 809G

SCi ™

PC
CD-ROM

12th APRIL

Paramount

PIXELOGIC
LIMITED

EMULATION ZONE

Stuart Campbell reports from a world where no platform is out reach

A rare sighting of a real *Baby Pac-Man*.

The hybrid pinball/videogame – how could it possibly have failed?

> "*Baby Pac-Man* seemed condemned to remain a vague and myth-like memory until the end of gaming time"

Fill in the gaps in your *Pac*-history.

IF YOU HAVEN'T been seduced by the charms of pinball emulation by now, viewers, you probably never will be. So Emulation Zone is going to let up on banging the drum for the superb pinball constructor/emulator for a bit, but we're going out on a real high note. In one of the most impressive feats of emulation to date, Visual Pinball and its sister program Visual PinMAME recently played host to a game that no one ever expected to see emulated, and which seemed condemned to remain a vague and myth-like memory until the end of gaming time.

Baby Pac-Man, released by Bally in 1982 at the height of the *Pac-Man* phenomenon (and slightly alarmingly subtitled "A Video Love Story"), was a hybrid videogame/pinball combination, a failed concept that would only ever see one other true example (Bally's *Granny*

And The Gators, released the same year and currently also being reanimated via VP). Built in small numbers (just a few thousand) and achieving only limited success, few gamers – no matter how acute their apparent *Pac*-mania – ever saw one in the flesh, and almost no working examples survive today. But now, thanks to a small team of dedicated Visual Pinball coders, *Baby Pac-Man* has been born again.

What's more, and despite the cutesy theme, it's a hugely compelling and ferociously tough game. *Baby Pac* starts off in a maze populated by tougher-than-usual *Pac*-ghosts, and one that contains none of the table-turning power pills. To earn those, you have to 'escape' through the tunnels at the bottom of the screen and onto the pinball playfield, where skilful shots will bring the crucial power-

ups into play next time you lose the ball and are returned to the video screen.

The combination of styles makes *Baby Pac-Man* a uniquely entertaining game, with the constant shifts between frantic maze chasing and the more leisurely but crucial pinball sections ensuring that you never get bored. It's a fascinating museum piece for would-be gaming historians, but more than that it's just a damn good game, which was unfortunately just a bit too weird for the arcade-going public of its day. But now you, fond *PC ZONE* reader, have a chance to put that right. Good luck and godspeed.

LINKS

www.hippie.net/vptables/tables.shtml – download *Baby Pac-Man*
www.vpforums.com – Visual Pinball forum (table files, help)

EMULATION OF THE MONTH

▲ **SILPHEED**

One of the PlayStation 2's more underwhelming titles at launch a year or so ago was *Silpheed 2*, the sequel to an on-rails shoot 'em up for Sega's catastrophic Mega CD system, which was itself a follow-up to a long-forgotten old DOS game from Sierra. Amazingly, the PlayStation 2 title was not only a far worse game than its parent (indeed, it was probably even less fun than the DOS game), but it was also technically less impressive. Mega CD *Silpheed,* on the other hand, was a stunning game that still looks great to this day, pitching you into a massive space battle filled with gargantuan enemy ships being blown into thousands of tiny little polygon pieces by enormous lasers while your Silpheed fighter

craft flits around them like a tiny bug. Very much a predecessor to the *Wing Commander* and *X-Wing* games, *Silpheed* can now be enjoyed once again via the superb Mega Drive emulator Gens, whose latest release offers fully working Mega CD emulation for the first time. The MCD had precious few games worth emulating (just about the only other one worthy of mention was Core Design's *Thunderhawk*), but *Silpheed* is reason enough on its own. Heed the silp.

LINKS

gens.consolemul.com – Gens homepage

MATCH ⚽ OF THE DAY

Where we take two games that look a bit similar and stage a match between them – for no other reason than that we can. In today's brutal clash…

Delta Force: Task Force Dagger Vs Conflict: Desert Storm

SO HERE WE are again in the hallowed grounds of *ZONE* stadium to preside over another epic match. This time tactics and patience will be key to the outcome, as both today's contenders pride themselves on depth of tactical action and thoughtful gameplay.

The newcomer today is *Delta Force: Task Force Dagger*, the recently announced follow-up to the popular but patchy *Delta Force* series of tactical FPSs. Having roundly botched the previous entry in the series, veteran developer Novalogic has enlisted the help of Zombie Studios (*Spec Ops*) to shape its latest contender, which once again pitches you into a variety of terrifyingly realistic covert ops in real-world military hotspots. Unfortunately, *Dagger* is being built on an updated version of the woeful *Land Warrior* engine, so it's unlikely to put on a dazzling visual display for us today, or any other day for that matter. However, a full complement of new faces is promised, as well as the choice of ten different special operations forces, including the game's original Delta Force, the Navy Seals and the British SAS.

AN ALMOST EPIC CLASH

Not daunted by the big name backing of the opposition, today's gutsy challenger is SCi's third-person tactical shooter *Conflict: Desert Storm*. The parallels between these two tussling behemoths are bordering on the uncanny, with *Desert Storm* also offering a variety of terrifyingly realistic covert ops in a real world military hotspot (the Gulf), and offering the choice of either Delta

Force or British SAS units. This time, however, teamwork is of the essence, as you'll guide not one but four elite soldiers through each mission, with the opportunity to upgrade your team as you gain experience. Clearly it's all about stealth, tactics and quick thinking.

LOOK AWAY NOW…

You have to agree it's a tough job to separate these two hungry hopefuls. It seems that *Desert Storm* may have the tactical advantage, given the strong squad-based dynamic in the face of the *Delta Force*'s traditional one-man army approach. However, with the *Spec Ops* boys at the helm perhaps we can expect a greater degree of co-operative play this time around. Only time will tell.

Desert Storm also recently won a major PR coup, becoming one of the official showcase titles for NVIDIA's GeForce 4 chipset. Whether *Task Force Dagger*'s lacklustre visual performance can compete with such credentials is doubtful, and it may lose crowd support as a result.

So, while the first-person vs third-person debate throws a bit of a wild card into the mix, on balance it seems that *Conflict: Desert Storm* will go home the victor today. (Though to be honest neither game has much hope of making the Champions' League.)

TASK FORCE DAGGER
Zombie Studios • ETA May •
www.zombie.com/games.htm

CONFLICT: DESERT STORM
SCi • ETA May •
www.sci.co.uk/games

Just look at that teamwork, as *Desert Storm*'s forward line demolishes a tank.

"The parallels between these two tussling behemoths are bordering on the uncanny"

It looks very much like a one-man strike force in *Task Force Dagger*.

Team	Pl	W	D	L	Pt
DESERT STORM	1	1	0	0	3
TF DAGGER	1	0	0	1	0

Flashpoint flashes back

Resistance is far from futile in the latest expansion pack for Bohemia's classic

IT'S ALL TOO MUCH. Not only did we bring you details of the much-rumoured follow up to Bohemoia Interactive's *Operation Flashpoint* last month, this month we've got news of the official expansion pack, *Operation Flashpoint: Resistance*.

This is no ordinary expansion, though, as it's almost big enough to be considered a sequel in its own right. First up is an entirely new 100 square kilometre island. Dedicated Flashers can now explore the scenic delights of Nogova, a well-inhabited locale blessed with plenty of greenery – ideal for any number of user-created missions.

The new single-player campaign tells the tale of Nogovian resident Victor Troska, a former Special Forces warrior, now retired and raising a family in peace. The arrival of several thousand Soviet troops soon shatters all that and Victor is forced to rely on his old skills to raise an army of freedom fighters and wage guerrilla warfare against the invaders.

Flashpoint has had a bit of a cosmetic lift as well, upping the resolution of textures and improving animations. Under the hood, the AI has gone through a customary improvement and networking code has been fully upgraded to provide a more robust multiplayer game. A bunch of new vehicles and weapons round out the mix.

At this stage, Bohemia is promising a June release. Trust us when we say we're all over this

Bohemia Interactive • ETA June •
www.flashpoint1985.com

It's peaceful now, but the residents of the isle of Nogova are about to reach flashpoint.

THE MAN WHO KNOWS

IN A RULING set to send shockwaves throughout the world of interactive entertainment, a judge has decreed that playing computer and video games does not necessarily make you a mass murderer. At the conclusion of the long running **Columbine High School** massacre lawsuit, it was deemed that those responsible for the shootings were in fact the two teenage gunmen who carried them out, as opposed to a number of games firms, including **Acclaim**, **Atari**, **Sony**, **Sega**, **id** and **Nintendo**, the latter being particularly notorious for the violent content of its sick *Super Mario* series. The case was brought by relatives of the 12 victims slain by Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold in 1999, after it was revealed that the pair were fans of *Doom*, although playing a six-year-old title would suggest that their interest in games was perhaps not as great as claimed. In dismissing the case, **Judge Lewis Babcock** bellowed: "It is manifest that there is social utility in expressive and imaginative forms of entertainment, even if they contain violence." He then wholly unnecessarily added,

> **"If you were ever in doubt that console gamers are a bunch of slack-jawed cretins, consider the case of Dan Holmes"**

"I must set aside my personal distaste in this matter." Not a big *Quake* player, then.

More media manipulation comes with the news that 'controversial' football violence simulator, **Hooligans: Storm Over Europe**, has been given a **BBFC** rating and will finally be released in the UK. Having been snubbed by publishers for some two years, the **18 certificate** will enable developer **Darxabre** to distribute the game itself. This prompted a terse reply from industry watchdog **ELSPA**, who barked: "*Hooligans* was developed in Holland and the developers found it impossible to get any ELSPA members to take it on and distribute it in the UK. The reasons were twofold: it was not viewed as being a good game and the content was seen as contrary to the ELSPA code of practice. The fact that none of ELSPA's members wished to handle the game in the UK clearly illustrates the levels of social responsibility that they maintain in the content of games for consumers. *Hooligans* is not a game with which the UK games industry wishes to be associated, and we regard it as unfortunate that it has obtained distribution here."

Ideal tabloid fodder, clearly, and the news even prompted an extremely truncated debate on **Channel 4**'s surrealist dole fodder show, *Richard & Judy*. All good publicity for the game, naturally, but it's also history repeating itself, as the same outraged stories were churned out when the game was originally announced some time in the last century. It's also an inordinate amount of publicity for a game that, unless it's changed drastically since the last **ECTS**, is a waste of time and effort.

And finally, if you were ever in doubt that console gamers are a bunch of slack-jawed cretins, consider the case of bachelor **Dan Holmes** from **Banbury**, who has changed his name to **PlayStation 2**. The tit.

Graphic novelty

New shooter *XIII* revealed with brave comic-book aesthetic

IN ITS SHORT history the medium of computer games has developed faster and proved more inventive than probably any other, yet it has also displayed a certain single-mindedness in visual terms. We've only got ourselves to blame, given the excitement with which we always drool over the next generation of games and their 'stunning photorealistic graphics', but there does exist a marked preoccupation with 'realistic' representations of the world in games, especially those made for PC.

Maybe some of you prefer it that way, but to us it seems like a very limited approach to a potentially more liberated medium. Hence, when we see something like Ubi Soft's newly announced *XIII*, we get a little hot and bothered. Not that this Unreal-powered FPS looks like any particular leap in gameplay terms, with its amnesiac hero and emphasis on stealth action, but simply because it looks different.

Based on a series of Belgian graphic novels of the same name, *XIII* uses a technique known as cel shading to render its dark comic-book world, a technique popularised by console games such as *Jet Set Radio*. Of course, cel shading has since become just another visual bandwagon used to cloak insipid rubbish in a veneer of cutting edge cool, but first impressions suggest that Ubi Soft is doing something far more exciting with it. Just take a look at these early images, with their deep, exaggerated shadows, reduced colour palette and noirish overtones – if this is any indication of the final look of the game it could be very interesting indeed.

We can't really comment on the subject matter, not being overly familiar with the Belgian comic scene, but we can tell you that the world of *XIII* is a dark and mysterious one full of espionage and conspiracy. The storyline is strongly reminiscent of Ludlum thriller *The Bourne Identity*, telling the tale of a chap who gets a knock on the head and loses his memory, the only clue to his identity coming from a tattoo reading XIII. Needless to say, he's soon under attack from various mysterious agencies and fighting for his life.

Perfect videogame fodder really; let's just hope Ubi Soft can follow through on the promise of these early screenshots and produce something truly original.

**Ubi Soft • ETA Q1 2003 •
www.ubisoft.co.uk**

It may lack detail at this stage, but the early signs are excellent.

Cry havoc

The next epic revealed: *Rayman 3 Hoodlum Havoc*

The hoodlums will be Rayman's fiercest foes to date, boasting group tactics, stealth and some very big guns.

ABOUT THE ONLY CARTOON platform/adventure series to find a place on the PC since the days of Commander Keen, Ubi Soft's *Rayman* franchise continues to grow with the announcement of *Rayman 3 Hoodlum Havoc*. After going off on a forgettable tangent with *Rayman M*, Ubi Soft is returning to the core series with another epic single player romp, amid promises to take the franchise to all new levels.

Aside from customary advancements in graphics, the game features a new enemy race, the hoodlums, a difficult bunch who seem to want Rayman's head on a platter. Obviously, from this starting point it's up to our little helicopter-jumping hero to negotiate the hoodlum world and resolve some sort of twee fantasyland calamity.

The main change since *Rayman 2: The Great Escape* seems to in the combat style, which is to progress from simple lum-shooting to a supposedly "innovative tactical arcade battle system".

Details remain scarce at this stage, but we're off to Ubi Soft's Montreal studio to see the game firsthand next issue, so expect a full report in the near future.

Ubi Soft • ETA Autumn • www.ubisoft.co.uk

The taste of blood

The pleasures of evil are yours to enjoy, in *Blood Omen 2*

IF YOU ENJOYED feeding on the souls of pathetic mortals in *Soul Reaver 2* as much as we did, then start sharpening your fangs in preparation for the next entry in the saga, *Blood Omen 2*. Recently confirmed for an imminent PC release, *BO2* picks up the other strand of Crystal Dynamics' *Legacy Of Kain* series, in which you play as the vampire Kain rather than his one-time lieutenant and nemesis Raziel.

While the first *Blood Omen* was a fairly average top-down affair, the series has taken huge leaps in the meantime, and this third-person action/adventure sequel promises to be just as elegant and playable as *Soul Reaver 2*.

In addition to all the usual puzzle solving, combat, and skill-gathering, this entry in the series offers a satisfying stealth element in the ability to move unseen through crowds, as well as leap from rooftop to rooftop and use mind control on your hapless prey. Instead of sucking souls from vanquished foes, *BO2* offers a comparable but slightly grislier health system built around drinking human blood. In fact, one of the game's pleasures promises to be the fact that Kain is a downright evil blood-sucking sonofabitch, which should make an excellent change from saving the world all the time.

Crystal Dynamics • ETA May • www.eidosinteractive.com/games

Kain has just awakened from a 300-year sleep, and he's got a mighty thirst on him.

CHARTS

In Association with **VIRGIN MEGASTORES**

Your one-touch guide to game releases past, present and future. Whether a game is lost, looming or selling like sim-cakes, this is where you'll find it

ChartTrack TOP 10

		TITLE	WEEKS IN CHART	SCORE
1	–	**MEDAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSAULT**	4	94%
2	NEW	COMMAND & CONQUER: RENEGADE	2	73%
3	▼	THE SIMS: HOT DATE	16	71%
4	NEW	STAR TREK: BRIDGE COMMANDER	1	83%
5	▼	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER: SEASON 01/02	22	92%
6	▼	THE SIMS	109	86%
7	NEW	WARRIOR KINGS	2	90%
8	▼	HARRY POTTER & THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE	17	80%
9	–	MONSTERS, INC.	6	N/A
10	▼	COSSACKS: THE ART OF WAR	5	83%

YOUR SHOUT

Have your say at www.pczone.co.uk

Have you seen the requirements for playing *Warrior Kings* online? 56K for just 2 players, cable or ADSL for 3-4 players (4 may be pushing it). Any more than that and it's basically a LAN match. I was going to get some more info about it before I thought about buying it, but when I noticed that you'd need a 1Gb connection to have a decent multiplayer session, I decided not to bother.
Original_aceman

Bridge Commander is crap. A bridge too far if you ask me. It's time to stop making all these shite *Star Trek* games. Just let it go, for chrissakes (not that I've played it of course).
Captain_Pickarse

I bought *Renegade* before I read your review and I think it's a top game. The AI is rubbish but then I'm no Einstein myself so it makes for an interesting challenge. Remember that games are supposed to be fun and I reckon anyone would enjoy it. I'm glad it's got to number two, but *Medal Of Honor* should definitely stay at the top for months.
Kild0zer

I found my little brother playing *Monsters, Inc.* the other day, and he was having so much fun I was almost tempted to give it a try. I caught myself at the last minute, but it did make me realise that people who don't know any better still sometimes get their 30 quid's worth from crap games.
Nepotismo

Virgin megastores TOP 10

1	MEDAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSAULT
2	C&C: RENEGADE
3	MONSTERS, INC. MINI GAMES
4	MONSTERS, INC. MONSTROPOLIS MISSION
5	THE SIMS: HOT DATE
6	WARRIOR KINGS
7	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 01/02
8	STAR TREK: BRIDGE COMMANDER
9	MAX PAYNE
10	CIVILIZATION III

COMPETITION

Win the entire Virgin Top 10!

Once again, *PC ZONE* and Virgin have teamed up to give you the chance to win every game in the current Virgin Top 10. All you have to do to enter the draw is answer the following simple question:

QUESTION: What's the name of the character you play in Electronic Arts' *Command & Conquer: Renegade*?

Just answer the above question and send it on a postcard, along with all the information requested, to the address below.

- Please include your name, address, daytime phone number, email address, job title and company name (and age if under 18).
- Please tell us if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies.
- Are you a current subscriber to *PC ZONE*?

Answers on a postcard to: *PC ZONE* Chart Compo (CPCZ5A), Dennis Publishing, PO Box 154, Bradford BD1 5RZ. Closing date: May 2 2002

Terms and conditions: winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply.

THREE NEW GAMES enter the top ten, and somehow they've managed to land in inverse order of quality (but correct order in terms of marketing budget). All worthwhile games in their own way of course, though *Renegade* is destined to disappoint those buoyed up by the brilliance of *Medal Of Honor*. *Wolfenstein* has now slipped further down the rankings to 15, and *Half-Life: Generations*, until recently hanging on to the top 10 with a tenacity second only to *The Sims*, has disappeared to 20th place. The debate may rage on forever about which FPS is superior, but in chart terms at least, *Medal Of Honor* is quickly proving to be the game that finally beat *Half-Life*. However, with the imminent release of *Condition Zero*, which looks good enough to add another year or more to the *Counter-Strike* phenomenon, fortunes could yet be reversed.

Also arriving with perfect timing in the next month or so is *The Sims On Holiday*, which history dictates will not only install itself in the upper reaches of the charts, but boost sales of other *Sims* offerings. With four add-ons, various bundle packs and the original game all in circulation, the possibility of an all-*Sim* top 10 is becoming all too real.
Anthony Holden

MISSING IN ACTION
The war's not over until the last game comes home...

Unreal II

THE MOST-WANTED game of 2002 is in grave risk of losing that enviable label. Not because another game has come along with any hope of looking as good as this traffic-stopping shooter, but because its arrival date is now hanging precariously close to the end of the year. According to Legend Entertainment's Mark Rein, we can now expect the game to hit shelves some time before Christmas but, sadly, he also reports that the brilliant-sounding multiplayer side of the game has been abandoned. Clearly this is because the game is now going to ship too close to sister title *Unreal Tournament II*, (recently renamed to *Unreal Tournament 2003*, but still due out this year). and the two games simply can't afford to compete with each other. It may make sense, but that doesn't mean we like it.

Legend Entertainment • ETA December •
www.legendent.com

Battlefield 1942

THE MORE THIS ambitious first-person action game slips, the more agitated young Richie Shoemaker becomes. The delays are made at once more bearable and more excruciating by the fact that the game looks better and better with every new screenshot, and right now we're all but convinced that *1942* is going to be the next big word in online warfare. The delays have been partly caused by the difficulty of balancing the 40-odd WWII vehicles in the game, now including a variety of controllable tanks, jeeps, APCs, battleships, carriers, destroyers, fighter planes and bombers. Start cancelling your summer plans now, this is going to be big.

Digital Illusions CE • ETA July •
www.dice.se

Yager

WE FIRST ENCOUNTERED this game way back at last year's E3, and we were immediately enamoured by its arcade-blasting goodness. Reminiscent of flight-based sci-fi shooters such as *Terminal Velocity* and *Rogue Squadron*, *Yager* boasts lush visuals and pick-up-and-play arcade dynamics, and was originally scheduled to appear last Christmas. We saw the game in action again recently, and though still looking extremely sharp, it has unfortunately fallen foul of Xbox syndrome – not surprising given the game's arcade inclinations. The developers have been so busy working on a version for Bill's black beast that the PC version has slipped all the way to this Christmas. Being treated so poorly by a developer may smart somewhat, but from what we've seen it should be worth the wait.

Yager Developments • ETA Christmas •
www.yager.de

US TOP 10

#	Game
1	MEDAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSAULT
2	THE SIMS: HOT DATE
3	SERIOUS SAM: THE SECOND ENCOUNTER
4	THE SIMS
5	HARRY POTTER & THE SORCERER'S STONE
6	NASCAR RACING SEASON 2002
7	ROLLER COASTER TYCOON
8	MICROSOFT ZOO TYCOON
9	UO: LORD BLACKTHORN'S REVENGE
10	BACKYARD BASKETBALL

INCOMING!

These are the big games that are going on sale in the next month or so. All dates are correct at the time of going to press, but we'd check ahead before running down to the shops in the driving rain.

GAME	PUBLISHER	RELEASE DATE
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3	Activision	March 28
Jedi Knight II	Activision	March 28
Hitman 2	Eidos	April 5
The Sims On Holiday	EA	April 5
UO: Lord Blackthorn's Revenge	EA	April 5
Dungeon Siege	Microsoft	April 17
Global Operations	EA	April 19
2002 FIFA World Cup	EA	April 26
Freedom Force	EA	May 3
Soldier Of Fortune II	Activision	May 17
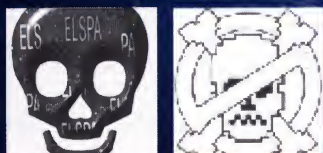
PIRACY: PART 2
THE KILLING GAME

This month we conclude our epic investigation into the truth about game piracy, with our front-line correspondent *Stuart Campbell*

"If something costs more than people think it's worth, they will always find a way around any methods of protection"

BACK WHEN your reporter was just a wee nipper, many years ago and certainly well outside the criminal statute of limitations thanks very much, he had a nice little tickle going for all the Sinclair Spectrum games that were beyond the reach of his pocket money. With his mate, who for the purposes of this anecdote we'll call Jimmy McSmith*, your reporter would stroll down to the local game store (John Menzies, in this particular instance), and ask them to load up a game for demonstration purposes. While the assistant handed over the tape for us to load (watching carefully all the while to make sure we didn't pocket it and scarper), it was a simple task to unobtrusively connect an extra tape lead to the recorder's MIC

socket. Due to the nature of old mono tape decks, the signal which was coming in through the recorder's EAR socket would also be transmitted out, slightly more quietly, through the MIC socket, from where it would travel through our surreptitiously-connected lead, up Jimmy's sleeve and into the extra tape recorder that he had strapped to the inside of his jacket. Five minutes later, bingo, one lovely new Spectrum game.

Now, clearly the purpose of relating this tale is not to enable *PC ZONE* readers to admire our misguided youthful ingenuity. We were bad young people and we now realise the error of our ways, m'lud. The point is, you can't stop piracy. If something costs more than people think it's worth, they will always find a way round any methods of protection. Indeed, the more you protect something, the more you tempt hackers who have very little interest in pirating games, but every interest in testing their skills against the latest encryption. The only way to combat piracy is to win the hearts and minds of your target audience, and the industry's attempts to do that so far have ranged from the offensive to the plain feeble. (See THE PERSUADERS boxout for examples.)

But the real question is, does the industry truly want to combat piracy at

AN INDUSTRY UNDER THREAT?

THE TRUE HEALTH OF THE GAMES BUSINESS #1

"By knowingly purchasing a counterfeited computer game, you are putting at risk the livelihoods of everyone involved in the legitimate leisure software industry." – Extract from 'The Morality Of Piracy', on ELSPA's website (www.elspa.com)

all? As we've just seen, its efforts so far have been so cack-handed, contradictory and counterproductive (in terms of generating and feeding the us-and-them 'outlaw' mentality that causes ordinary people to turn a blind eye to the most flagrant instances of piracy happening on their own doorsteps) that it's hard to believe it could be accidental. Even more convincing are the views expressed by

the industry in private, when it doesn't think the general public is listening (see JOLLY JACK TARS boxout). By a significant majority in every surveyed instance, the games industry privately not only believes that piracy doesn't actually represent a threat to its continued wellbeing, but that in fact piracy, in almost all forms, acts as a benefit to the industry, by generating hardware sales and hence

increasing the size of the market as a whole. (The industry knows only too well, for example, that the most successful profit-generating game platform of all time, the PlayStation, is also the most widely pirated.)

Of course, announcing this publicly would lead to an overnight collapse in the market, as no-one would be prepared to fork out £40 for a game ever again, so the

industry is required to exercise a certain amount of public fibbing, and private doublethink. For example, ELSPA (the European Leisure Software Publishers Association) states that "fighting software theft is perhaps its most important task", yet the organisation's Crime Unit devotes just £500,000 a year to The War On Piracy (or TWOP), which represents a microscopically tiny 0.12 per cent of the European games industry's annual revenues of almost £4bn. It doesn't sound like they're all that bothered, does it? At this point, it seems only fair to speak to ELSPA, in the form of its deputy director general, Mike Rawlinson. Mike, we said, given the figures in *Screen Digest*, this doesn't sound like an industry in peril. If piracy's been killing the games business for 20 years, why isn't it dead yet?

"We probably haven't reached the pinnacle of the potential of the market yet. We're going through a phase of new platforms and new hardware penetration, which will of course expand the market. If you look at the music industry, you've had the expansion of the delivery format, the market expanded to its ultimate level, and now future growth is being hit because of piracy. That will occur in the games industry if we don't continue to be vigilant on the whole issue of piracy."

AN INDUSTRY UNDER THREAT?

THE TRUE HEALTH OF THE GAMES BUSINESS #2

"Despite all the doom and gloom talk of console transition and a 'difficult' market, the total UK market for leisure software grew again in 2000 to reach £934.4m – the highest value ever reached... this is quite remarkable given the cyclical nature of the games business and the fact that all previous transition periods have actually resulted in a significant downturn in the overall market. We believe that this demonstrates the inherent strength and vigour of this now mature industry." – Extract from the most recent edition of *Screen Digest*, the industry's yearly statistical bible.

A ship and a crew in the old days, now all you need is a few off-white boxes.

CULTURE OF DESTRUCTION

IS IT A CRIME TO BE OLD?

One of the things that muddies the ground of piracy so much is the moral ambivalence most people feel towards piracy in the forms of emulation and abandonware. The games industry's indiscriminate hatred of all forms of intellectual-property infringement does much to foster the "them and us" mentality that helps pirates to thrive. More confusing yet, the industry prevents a far from united front. The number of authors and publishers of old 8-bit and 16-bit games who have now granted permission for their old games to be distributed free of charge on websites is now counted in the hundreds, and growing all the time, particularly (for some reason) regarding Spectrum and Amiga titles. Others, however, flatly forbid the distribution of their old games. Codemasters, one of the publishers who feels most strongly about piracy, takes this view and block any distribution of old titles, even in instances where the actual game authors (such as the Oliver Twins, creators of many vintage Codies titles and now running Blitz Games) have given their personal assent. But why Gavin Raeburn, Codemasters Studio Head? What harm are you preventing by stopping gamers playing Speccy games like *Advanced Pinball Simulation* in 2002?

"The first reason is that we are always looking at how we can rework old classic games for new formats. For example, Jester has just bought the rights to a number of old Spectrum games, such as *Manic Miner*. These games are ideal for mobile phones, GameBoy and set-top boxes etc, and are a potential source of revenue for the publishers and developers. We are even looking at giving away some of our slightly newer games, such as *Psycho Pinball* on PC (which I coded BTW!), on our website to increase traffic. Secondly, any kind of distribution of old titles would need to have a detailed contract attached to it to ensure that IP or other related content was not being given away accidentally. This is an expensive legal minefield that does not justify the resources or the time to implement."

But hardly anyone else in the industry seems to think that it – or even piracy in general – matters that much (see JOLLY JACK TARS box out). Does Codemasters feel like some sort of

isolated keepers of the intellectual property flame?

"This just shows the extent to which people need educating both in and out of the games industry. I have met people in shops who on seeing my Codemasters T-shirt have asked me how they can copy their new Codemasters game for a friend. I have seen news stories on TV showing kids playing games, where you can see racks of gold disks that they have bought illegally. Most people don't even realise that they are doing anything wrong here. Piracy is theft. Taking something that is not yours, is theft. You do not walk out of EB with a game without paying, because you know that is theft. Why should it be OK to get someone else to do that for you, where you are then accepting stolen goods, be it on gold disk or via a download? Just because software piracy is easy to do, and the consequences of your actions are never apparent, doesn't mean it is right. This is no different to putting in a false insurance claim. You think no one is suffering from this, but of course premiums go up, and this affects everyone.

"Working with ELSPA and similar organisations and distributors around Europe has shown that piracy levels are as high as 60 per cent in places like Spain and Portugal, and in other places like Argentina and the Far East, piracy levels are around 97 per cent. If we do not attempt to stem piracy in any way, this will become a more and more accepted practice, and our industry will not be able to sustain itself. Why will consumers continue to buy products from legitimate sources if they can buy a pirate copy at a much cheaper price where developers and publishers do not get paid for their investment and hard work? People get away with what they can. It's human nature, but that doesn't mean it's right, and if our industry is to survive and continue to take risks and invest in producing quality titles, then we need to protect it. I do not see why my team and I should bust our balls each and every day of the year to get quality products out to the consumer, only to have a large number of people steal this work from us? No one else would accept their work or property being stolen from them, and I don't see why we should accept it either."

The rest of the industry doesn't appear to share your fears, though. The rest of the industry seems to think that piracy at worst doesn't harm them, and at best is actually a benefit.

"I think if you're not working in it every day of the week, in the piracy sense, then you may not see the extent of the problem, particularly among young people. I've got a teenage son and he tells me regularly about his pals who are copying and swapping games, and they just do not see anything wrong in that whole operation."

Why do you think people don't see anything wrong in it? Why, in 20 years of campaigning, have you not managed to sway that opinion?

"Because it's undetectable, uncontrollable and unpoliceable. The problem exists in many areas of society these days. People drive down the road at above the speed limit. I'm driving now – and perhaps I shouldn't be when I'm talking to you – but I'm keeping to the speed limit and people are passing me every minute of the day. And why do they pass me? They know the speed limit exists, but they take the risk that there isn't a camera around the corner and as long as they don't get caught, it's OK. In other words, people in society these days are getting very much to the case where they disregard the law if they can, and I think the same applies to piracy."

That's quite a serious allegation, isn't it? Are you basically implying that we live in an outlaw society?

"Absolutely, I think that's absolutely right, and I daresay that if we went around

to your organisation, perhaps even my organisation, and in companies throughout the UK, we will find at least one computer in every business that has software that's not licensed."

So the problem is that people are just fundamentally criminal scum, then?

"The difficulty is that people try to justify this behaviour to themselves by saying 'I can do this, so I will.' As a society, we do that because we think that computer software is not a commodity. If I go into town and see a bicycle that I want to use and just take it, obviously I'm depriving the legitimate owner of the use of it, whereas with a digital product, they're not disadvantaged because they've still got the product, I've got it too, and there's this notion that therefore no-one is harmed. But it's wrong, and we have to educate society. We've got to start with the kids in the schools, and make them understand that 'If I can't afford it, I can't have it.' It's a tough lesson that everyone has to pull together to learn if we're going to keep our society together."

Do you have an impossible job winning people over while having to continually big up the business' huge and growing finances?

"It's a difficult job, but I don't think it's impossible. We do have the one advantage on the piracy side, and this is a very real factor, in that the majority of people who are trading in pirated products are criminals in other areas. There are a lot of drugs involved in piracy, illegal immigrants trading in piracy because they can't get legitimate

> ## "People may think they're getting a quick fix or a cheap product, but actually they're damaging the whole essence of the society in which we live"
>
> **MIKE RAWLINSON**
> DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL, ELSPA

AN INDUSTRY UNDER THREAT?

THE TRUE HEALTH OF THE GAMES BUSINESS #3

"It is perhaps the comparative dynamism of the leisure software market that is the most impressive. Over the five-year period from 1996 to 2000, the interactive entertainment market has grown by a staggering 111 per cent. By comparison, video retail spending grew by 37 per cent, cinema ticket spending by 36 per cent, and video rental and music spending by just 16 per cent." – Extract from the most recent edition of *Screen Digest*.

Mike Rawlinson, deputy director general, ELSPA.

Late 1980s anti-piracy ad sponsored by ELSPA and FAST (the Federation Against Software Theft, still in existence today, though with a much lower profile).

employment, there's tax fraud, benefit fraud and so forth, and what we have to get over to the general public is that if they buy products from these people, they may think they're getting a quick fix or a cheap product, but actually they're damaging the whole essence of the society in which we live, which ultimately means that they'll be paying more through their taxes and VAT and so on. So people have to realise that actually they don't want their own community to suffer, through these drug peddlers, illegal immigrants, people putting pornography on discs that could damage children, and maybe we can strengthen our arguments when people get to realise those things as well."

AN INDUSTRY UNDER THREAT?

THE TRUE HEALTH OF THE GAMES BUSINESS #4

"Globally, we estimate that the world interactive leisure software market was worth US$17.7bn in 2000. Indeed, according to our estimates, the world market has more than doubled since 1995, and there are few – if any – other media markets that can show comparable growth." – Extract from the most recent edition of *Screen Digest*.

THE PERSUADERS

WINNING HEARTS AND MINDS

Considered, thought-provoking, convincing and effective rhetoric? Or laughable scare mongering and hysterical dogma produced with no hope or intention of reducing piracy at all? You decide.

"If you use illegal software, then you contributed towards... large sums of that money could have quite easily (and probably has) been invested in the IRA, the Maffia [sic], Triad gangs, money laundering rackets, prostitution rings... how do you feel about that?" – From 'The Morality Of Piracy', www.elspa.com.

"You may think that saying 'piracy harms children' is unfounded, but it really is true. Many pirate compilation discs, mainly for the PC, also contain explicit pornographic material. Not just 'glamour' pictures, but anything and everything including paedophilia and rape." – From 'The Morality Of Piracy', www.elspa.com.

GONE IN 60 SECONDS

MORE CARPARK LARCENISTS.

As alert readers of last month's article will recall, in the name of investigative journalism your reporter recently journeyed deep into the criminal underworld of software piracy, which is to say went down to the local open-air market and talked to some pirates, both sellers and customers. And let me tell you, viewers, very few things make a 30-something journalist feel more conspicuous than going up to 14-year-old boys in hospital car parks in a freezing winter downpour and saying "Hey, can I talk to you for a minute? I just want to ASK YOU A FEW QUESTIONS!" (This last bit being shouted loudly at the fast-disappearing youth as he races off over the horizon in terror). Anyway, once I'd managed to look sufficiently unlike either an undercover policeman or a child molester by copying some facial expressions and stances I saw in a Linkin Park video on MTV2 once, I got to talk to a few market punters. Most, as you'd expect from a constituency of mostly teenage/early-20s blokes, made little coherent sense, but one, a gamer in his late teens, had a couple of interesting insights. We'll call him Surprisingly Articulate Pirate Kid.

PCZ: So, if it's not a completely stupid question, why are you here buying pirated games instead of proper ones?
SAPK: It's a pretty stupid question. Why do you think?

PCZ: Um, because they're four quid each instead of 40?
SAPK: Yeah, and because most of them are crap.

PCZ: Come on, that argument doesn't work any more, does it? Big chains like EB do exchanges with no questions asked if you don't like a game you've bought these days. Surely you can't still use the 'It's too much to risk if it turns out to be rubbish' routine any more?
SAPK: Yeah, but what happens if there's nothing good to exchange it for? Even if you swap it, like, three times, the other games could all be shit as well, and you're still 40 quid down with no good games to show for it. Plus you end up getting banned from the store. [PCZ legal note: we have no evidence to suggest that any game retailers have banned customers for repeated use of exchange policies.]

PCZ: That can still happen with pirate copies too, though. All the games you've bought here today could be rubbish, and you'd be just as out of pocket.
SAPK: They do exchanges here too, though. But the real difference is that you don't need 40 quid in the first place. I've hardly ever got 40 quid in my hand at a time. It's like, if I've got 20 quid I'll go out, or buy a CD. I never get to 40, y'know? Down here you only need a fiver and you can get a brand new game.

Which is, of course, an excellent point. A huge percentage of the gaming market, even the PC one, is still made up of teenagers, and with official government statistics showing average pocket money to be somewhere around two quid a week, it doesn't take a genius to figure out the frequency with which teens (or anyone else, when it comes to it) have 40-quid-sized chunks of disposable income, ie almost never. It's a bit like the makers of Chupa Chups deciding to move upmarket, put blobs of the finest caviar in their lollipops and sell them for 20 quid a shot, momentarily forgetting that the chief market for lollipops aren't upwardly-mobile stockholding City executives, it's young people. Like, duh.

> **"Piracy is theft. Taking something that is not yours, is theft. You don't walk out of EB with a game without paying, because you know that is theft"**
>
> **GAVIN RAEBURN**
> STUDIO HEAD, CODEMASTERS

JOLLY JACK TARS

PIRACY – WHAT THE INDUSTRY REALLY THINKS

The games industry's official party line on piracy couldn't be any clearer. Publicly, the industry believes that piracy costs the games business billions of pounds every year, does untold damage to software publishers, imperils the continued survival of the industry, is morally despicable and exposes vulnerable young children to paedophilia and heroin. (The last two assertions being taken directly from the website of ELSPA, the European Leisure Software Publishers Association. "The guy that did you a 'favour' by saving a few quid on a game today could tomorrow be selling heroin to your son or daughter", warns the site in apocalyptic tones.)

However, in private the industry's views are very different. A little over a year ago, *Computer Trade Weekly*, the games trade newspaper of which I'm occasionally features editor, conducted a poll of its readers, asking the question "Is piracy killing the games industry?" With *CTW*'s readers all being either games industry professionals or retailers, you might expect the result to be something of a foregone conclusion, but in fact just 18 per cent of respondents voted "Yes" and 10 per cent "Don't know", leaving a whopping 72 per

cent in the "No, piracy isn't killing the games industry" camp.

Even more dramatically, *Edge*, a major industry-focussed newsstand games mag, conducted around the same time, its own detailed anonymous survey of industry personnel. The results were little short of staggering. In answer to the question "Have you used pirated software in the last three years?" A massive 85 per cent replied "Yes". When then asked: "Do you consider yourself a criminal for having done so?" A whopping 74 per cent said "No". Only 23 per cent agreed with the statement "Piracy is theft", and indeed, only 32 per cent could even be persuaded to answer "Yes" to the question "Is downloading a game from the Internet without paying for it morally wrong?"

Further questions in the survey included "Does piracy lead to job losses within the games industry?" Just 37 per cent said "Yes". In answer to the question: "Would the software industry be larger and accrue more revenue if piracy didn't exist?" Only 53 per cent said "Yes", leaving almost half of the industry unconvinced that piracy does any financial harm to the games business at all, and – most revealingly of all was the question: "Is a modicum of software piracy of benefit to any gaming format, as the availability of pirated software encourages uptake of hardware?" A huge 75 per cent of respondents answered "Yes" (with another 13 per cent unsure, leaving just 12 per cent saying "No").

The conclusions of the survey speak for themselves. Not only does the games industry (and respondents to the survey include some very senior figures) enthusiastically embrace pirate software itself (and see nothing wrong in doing so), but it doesn't believe piracy damages publishers and developers, and furthermore believes that the widespread availability of pirate games is actually a benefit to a platform (and hence to the industry as a whole). Indeed, we're looking at one of the most striking declarations of "Do as I say, not as I do" in the entire history of polemic.

No change, then, in the policy ELSPA wish to present to the public. It's easy to pick holes in (for example, the view that the industry will in fact keep growing for as long as new hardware formats come along, which of course they will), and it's certainly a pessimistic view – people are inherently criminal and will commit crimes if they can get away with it – but it shows the industry's trade body is at least aware of the PR battle it has on its hands with TWOP. Whether going into schools and saying "Piracy is naughty, and will get you in trouble with evil drug dealers and illegal immigrants and pornographers" – much as the industry's been doing for the last 20 years with a spectacular lack of success – is the solution to the problem is a different matter. You'd think that even the most recalcitrant student would learn a lesson after 20 years of failure. If, that is, they wanted to succeed in the first place. **PCZ**

■ Though his real name is Simon Reid, 12 Riddoch Hill Avenue, Blackburn, West Lothian.

WARNING
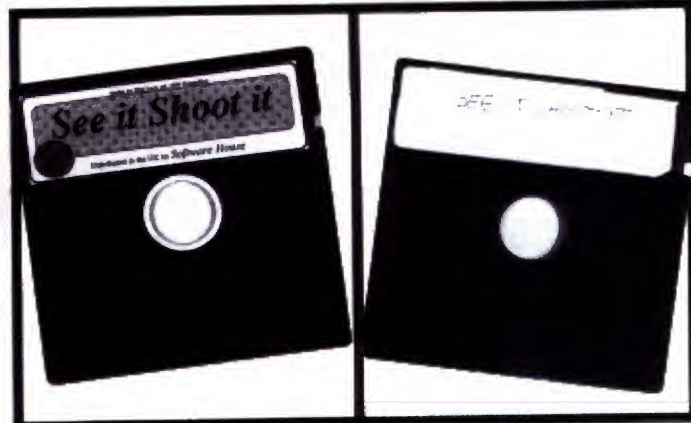
THIS DISK COSTS £14.99

THIS DISK COULD COST £2,000

It's against the law to pirate software. You can be fined £2,000 or go to prison for six months.

THIS CAMPAIGN IS ORGANISED BY
ELSPA
EUROPEAN LEISURE SOFTWARE
PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

Any information on piracy should be passed to The Federation Against Software Theft. Telephone 01-240 6756

PIRACY IS THEFT

The 1980s approach favoured the twin carrot-and-stick method of deterrence. Can't be bought with a £1,000 reward for grassing up your unpopular math teacher? Then face six months in chokey for owning a single copy of *See It Shoot It*, you anti-social young tearaway.

FOGGY MOUNTAIN BREAKDOWN

EVER ASKED YOURSELF WHERE ALL YOUR MONEY GOES?

When passing sentence on a pair of convicted game pirates last year at Leicester Crown Court, Judge Richard Bray said: "I have not closed my eyes to the fact that the retailers and publishers [of videogames] are grossly overcharging the general public." But are they? Even after 20-odd years, there's still a dense mist of confusion over who actually gets what from the price of a game, and hence who is to blame for them being so expensive. (Since we established last month that it's got bugger-all to do with development costs.) Various attempts at explanation have been made, often contradictory or plain wrong – one games magazine famously even managed to forget to include VAT in their breakdown of where the money went. But the big problem is that most attempts to break down the pricing of games operate from a fundamentally wrong premise in the first place. Trust PC ZONE to get it right, and read on.

AVERAGE NEW GAME RRP: £39.95

VAT: £6
At a fat 17.5 per cent, VAT immediately bumps up the price of your game from £34. Of course, VAT isn't a flat-rate fee – if games cost less, the VAT would be proportionately less, too. So you can't really blame the government for the price of games.

RETAIL MARGIN: £14
It's long been a strange fact of life that, especially in Britain, is a huge chunk of the price of leisure software goes to the people who do the least work on it. While margins have been squeezed in recent years, roughly 40 per cent of the retail price of a game (exclusive of VAT) goes to the people who simply buy 'em in, stick 'em on a shelf and pay some spotty kid four quid an hour to flog 'em. Of course, before you go and burn down your local Electronics Boutique in righteous fury, remember that games rarely sell for the RRP these days – certainly not beyond the first couple of weeks – and 100 per cent of the ubiquitous discounting comes straight out of the retailer's pocket, making a big hole in their cut to add to the risk of stocking a stiff. And again, retailer margin is a percentage, so it's not an obstacle as such to prices being lower.

DISTRIBUTION: £1
An arcane process by which games magically arrive from the duplicators to the shop shelves, via blokes in white vans paid by the boxload.

MANUFACTURING COSTS: £0.50
Physical production of games costs the square root of sod-all. After all, if pirates can afford to duplicate games, put them in nice cases and still flog them for two quid and make a profit, it doesn't take a genius to work out what sort of costs are involved. In fact, with blank CDs costing about 6p each in bulk quantities these days, 50p is probably an over-generous estimate.

ROYALTIES: £2
Developer royalties are becoming rather less of a factor these days, as more and more development teams are actually in-house staff. It's almost impossible to fund games development independently now, so more and more games are created by developers as part of a salaried job rather than on a royalty basis. Of course, those salaries still represent an expense to the publishers, and most developers still receive some kind of royalty on sales, so in fact this situation contributes to increased costs. After all, if your developers spend four years producing a game (for the sake of argument, let's call this purely imaginary game "Waikatana") and it stinks the place out and only sells 25 copies, you've still had to pay them fat developer wages for four years.

However, with around half of all games now being licensed properties, you now have to consider the royalties

Unlike the GBA, developers don't have to pay a hardware license fee to develop on the PC.

being paid to the licensor, whether it's David Beckham, Celador (owners of Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?), the F1A or whoever. Such bodies wised up long ago to the industry's former practice of buying up licences outright, and now they take a chunk of sales as well as an upfront fee. Between licensor and developer, then, it's probably fair to account for 5 per cent of a game's ticket price is going in royalties. (Although, also see the "Development/Overheads" section below for why even that represents far from exact science.)

HARDWARE LICENSE FEE: £0
If you release a game on the PlayStation 2 or GameBoy Advance, a whacking 25 per cent or so of the VAT-exclusive price – as much as £9 – goes straight to Sony or Nintendo for the privilege of being allowed to publish your game on their nice format at all. With the PC, of course, this fee doesn't apply, which makes the fact that PC games generally have the same RRP as console titles a lot harder to excuse.

DEVELOPMENT/OVERHEADS: £?
And here's the rub. Putting an average price on game development as a percentage of retail cost is a farcically impossible task. Development costs are a fixed one-off fee, wildly variable anywhere on a scale between £100,000 (Mr Driller, say) and £50 million (the latest Final Fantasy), and depending on sales could account for anywhere between 2 per cent and 400 per cent of the game's total retail revenue. (because, of course, not every game makes its costs back, far less turn a profit). This is part of the reason why the whole 'development costs' issue is such a total red herring with regard to game pricing – there simply is no such thing as an 'average cost' in percentage terms for producing a video game, and it's misleading to pretend otherwise.

AVERAGE COST OF A GAME: £39.99 RRP

THAT'S HOW MUCH A GAME COSTS, BUT WHERE DOES ALL THE MONEY GO?

What that realisation leaves you with, then, is a slightly less headline-friendly but much more informative figure. From an RRP of £40, a PC game publisher receives about £16.50 per copy sold (regardless of any discounting). To figure out if you're being fleeced or not, multiply that by the number of copies sold (anywhere from single-figure thousands for a flop to many millions for a smash hit) and subtract the costs of production, from development to admin to marketing and so on. (Then remember to factor in subsequent budget/mid-price/compilation sales, which are effectively 'free' extra cash and can sometimes actually generate more money than the original full-price release.) If, on the other hand, the same game had an RRP of £15, the publisher would be receiving about £5.25 per copy (a slightly lower percentage, since distribution and duplication costs are absolutes rather than percentages), obviously meaning about three times as many copies would need to be sold to make back the same money. Would you buy three times as many games at £15 as at £40? Would people you know who don't buy games buy them at that price? You'll have to judge that one yourselves.

The bottom line you'll end up with is that pricing games at £40 is a Las Vegas way of doing business. The majority of games don't and can't pay for themselves, but the occasional big win bankrolls all the failures. It's when those big hits don't come along that the fundamental fragility of the business model is exposed, and it's that, not piracy, that causes most of the financial hardships affecting game publishers.

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Ubi Soft Montreal/
Red Storm Entertainment
PUBLISHER Ubi Soft
WEBSITE www.raven-shield.com
ETA Autumn

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

■ The *Rainbow Six* series has a
tradition of combining realism with
tense, exciting gameplay
■ It uses the latest *Unreal* engine
■ AI to be vastly improved
■ Easier planning and on-the-fly
command interface

CV · Ubi Soft

UBI SOFT MONTREAL

They haven't got that many titles under their
belt yet, but the close ties with Red Storm
mean there's plenty of experience here

2001 *Rogue Spear: Black Thorn* is their only
proper previous game, although they have
also ported the PS2 game *Batman
Vengeance* to the Xbox and GameCube.

Tom Clancy goes unreal

RAINBOW SIX: RAVEN SHIELD

**The popular tactical shooter finally gets the looks to match its
gameplay. *Mark Hill* gets the lowdown**

IT MIGHT SOUND like
something a level 13 wizard might cast in
the middle of an ogre battle, or a special
umbrella available at the Tower of London
to protect you from the local birds'
droppings. But, of course, it isn't. Do you
really think we'd devote five pages to
talking about either of those? What *Raven
Shield* is, as if the big words at the top of
this article weren't clue enough, is the
second sequel to the trend-setting
Rainbow Six. And that is more than worth
a few minutes of your time, especially
when you consider that we have exclusive
information available nowhere else except
Ubi Soft's development offices in
Montreal. And believe us, the *Rainbow Six*
nuts in the US are not happy about it at all.

You know the drill. You control an elite
team of counter-terrorists who are sent on

missions around the world. You plan
your tactics in advance, you rescue the
hostages and you die a lot. You also
spend a considerable amount of time
wiping sweat off your brow as the tension
escalates with each step. Every corner,
every closed door hides a potential bullet
in the head.

Although the first *Rainbow Six* game
detonated the whole tactical team shooter
genre, a lot has happened since the
sequel *Rogue Spear* appeared three years
ago. Games like *Hidden & Dangerous*
and, specially, *SWAT 3* (another urban
special operations, close-quarter title)
have made *Rainbow Six*'s rigid and
complicated pre-mission planning seem
archaic with smooth, on-the-fly command
systems that allowed you to immerse
yourself in the action with much greater

ease. Graphics too have moved on from
those ugly, angular polygons, which might
be why Raven Shield is using the latest
Unreal technology. But more on that later.

CLASSIC TERRORISM

Remember when leading a special group
of agents against terrorists operating on a
worldwide scale seemed like the stuff of
fiction? Not anymore. While IRA attacks
have always been on the British
conscience, the 'T' word has taken on a
new dimension since September 11. One
that sends a shiver up the spine of every
citizen in the democratic (Western/
capitalist/secular if you prefer) world.

According to Mathieu Ferland though,
the game's senior producer, *Raven Shield*
neatly sidesteps the whole thing by
steering clear of Islamic fundamentalism

All the images hint at the graphics to come, with exquisite foliage and amazing attention to detail.

and concentrating on what he calls "classic terrorism".

"Rainbow Six has always dealt with classic terrorism," says Mathieu. "As a potential terrorist threat unfolds, Intel will receive information before it occurs and the local authorities might intervene, or the Rainbow Six team will be alerted and prepare to act." In classic terrorism (the kind that Hollywood has safely used for years in its plots), the terrorist groups make demands and take hostages/plant bombs/set up a chemical attack and so on. These are all things that can be dealt with. The FBI has manuals on the stuff. It's not the nightmarish, almost inconceivable situation that you get when a group of inhuman extremists decide to fly two airliners into the most heavily populated buildings in New York. "The events of September 11 were considered war attacks," Mathieu continues. "There was no negotiation before and no clear demands. In this kind of situation, there is no place for an international elite police team and the activation of Rainbow Six would not be justified."

What we have here then, is a set of realistic scenarios that can be dealt with tactically and heroically. These are manageable fantasies, even if they do conform to the stringent standards of believability anything with the Tom Clancy™ name on it must deal with. "Even if Clancy's stories are never 'real-life events', the geopolitical context is usually very close to reality, which adds a lot of credibility and tension to the plot. Of course, since September 11," he adds, "we wanted to make sure that *Raven Shield*'s threats and characters made no reference to those terrible events."

As with all *Rainbow Six* titles, the setting is slightly futuristic, to allow for credible political changes and, more interestingly from a gameplay point of view, to slot in some nifty gadgets. In this case, the "geopolitical" background

"We wanted to make sure that *Raven Shield*'s threats and characters made no reference to the terrible events of September 11"

Proof that SWAT teams date back to the time of Neanderthal Man.

involves the collapse of the Eastern bloc, putting the setting for most of the missions in Europe and South America.

REAL UNREAL

The environments promise to be more varied than the ones in previous *Rainbow* games with missions taking place in hot locales and snowy fields, suburban houses and rocky mountains.

Although there is still very little information on the actual missions – primarily because they're still being designed and built – we do know for sure that one of them takes place in and around a London bank being terrorised by an armed gang.

"The intervention takes place inside the building," says Mathieu, "but before getting inside you'll definitely notice the high quality of the graphics." And the quality of the graphics is certainly something that separates *Raven Shield* from previous Rainbow titles. It seems every developer is jumping on the *Unreal* train, and Ubi Soft is no different. But while it might be perfectly normal for adrenaline-filled shooters to use the hottest engine around, it has come as a surprise to many that it will be used for such a slow, thoughtful, realism-obsessed game. *Rainbow Six* has always been high on tension and atmosphere, but fancy effects? Forget it. But there's a very good reason why they chose it.

"We wanted a powerful and reliable engine and tools that could provide nice, realistic environments, freeing us up to spend most of our programming efforts on AI, team management and tactical aspects, and not having to start everything from scratch." It seems like a very sensible decision when you think about it. The engine is so advanced that it can easily be used to create real-world

scenarios, spot on soldier animation and the kind of detail that is so crucial to this kind of game. The weakest feature of *Unreal*-powered games has always been the AI, so it's encouraging to know that a lot of time is being spent on that area.

"It's a key element of the game. Our objective is to make the enemies react according to the way you are playing, so the experience may be different each time you play." Rather than stand in the same room or always go in the same direction, the enemies don't follow a specific path or action plan once they've seen you. "They may call for back-up, hide and wait, or run at you screaming like crazy." And while the satellite intelligence you get before a mission is usually pretty accurate, both terrorists and hostages can have moved by the time you get there. "Once again, our goal is to provide a strong replay value and a new experience each time you play. That also means they will be unpredictable."

WHEN A PLAN COMES TOGETHER

The big questions though are how good will the AI of your team be, and whether the tortuous pre-mission planning will still be there. After all, while a small number of people actually enjoyed spending ages setting waypoints and pointing arrows all over the place, most gamers just wanted to get on with the action. After playing something like *SWAT 3*, where a beautifully simple command interface let

"The quality of the graphics is certainly something that separates *Raven Shield* from previous Rainbow titles"

Expect the character detail and animation to be awesome.

you give orders during the missions without missing a step, it all seems like a waste of time. Well, the good news is that, while the planning is still in there, it has been simplified to make it easier and faster to use. And you will also be able to give commands during the action with a new interface. "We want to stay faithful to the Rainbow Six spirit from the Clancy novels. The operatives are heavily trained and they always start by carefully studying the Intel information before entering the fray. Everything during a mission moves quite fast, so timing and co-ordination are very important. You need to know what you're going to do before you get to the action phase, otherwise it would just be suicide." The improved AI will ensure your team-mates do exactly what you've told them to do, but you can also give out new orders to respond to the events unfolding around you. And you needn't worry about them running off and getting themselves killed. "They'll communicate with you, but you're the only one who can make decisions." Just how we like it.

It will be interesting to see how the new command system affects multiplayer games. Although it isn't all that popular over here, in the States and Korea the heavily tactical gameplay is massive online. We don't really expect that to change this time round. While Ubi Soft has paid close attention to the strengths and weaknesses of Counter-Strike, they're very keen to keep Rainbow Six's identity. So don't expect any fast arcade action.

BANG AND CLEAR

Ghost Recon translated the Rainbow Six feel into wide-open spaces very well, but I still felt that the best bits in the game were the ones set in urban environments where you could scuttle inside buildings. Raven Shield isn't really a continuation of Ghost Recon though. In fact, it isn't even being developed by the same team. Ubi Soft's Montreal development branch created the rather tasty Rogue Spear: Black Thorn last year, and have now been handed the job of coming up with a proper sequel all by themselves. Not that Red Storm is too far away. As Mathieu says: "We are working very closely with them and meet up regularly. The team at Red Storm are highly involved on core topics of the

Daisies in a Tom Clancy game? He'll be spitting blood.

WHO WANTS TO READ A TOM CLANCY DOORSTOPPER WHEN YOU CAN PLAY ONE OF THE GAMES?

SSN (1996)
Before Red Storm was founded, Clancy Interactive Entertainment created this nuclear submarine sim which used a lot of video briefings between missions. Despite what you can see in the confusing screenshot, this wasn't considered a hardcore simulation. Mildly amusing, but hardly a smash.

POLITIKA (1997)
Essentially a computer board game, Politika is set in a hypothetical world where Boris Yeltsin dies and eight political factions (among them the KGB, the church and the Mafia) struggle to take over. It's not quite Risk, but the thick layers of intrigue make it one of the best Communist simulators around.

RAINBOW SIX (1998)
Among all the sci-fi nonsense that dominated shooters at the time, the first Rainbow Six's introduction of real weapons, complex tactics and slow, tense gameplay was a breath of fresh air. It also added stealth to the equation, paving the way for the likes of Thief to transform the way we play first-person games. It was followed by the add-on pack Eagle Watch.

ROGUE SPEAR (1999)
The massive success of Rainbow Six meant a sequel didn't take long in coming. Rogue Spear improved in all areas without being too different from the original, and retained most of the characters and the much maligned pre-mission planning. The AI was still far from perfect, but some great missions and level design made it all worthwhile.
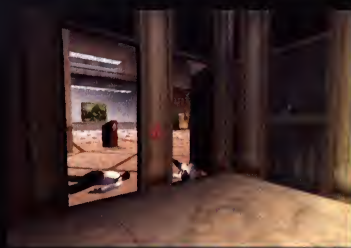
RUTHLESS.COM (1999)
Red Storm's online experiment wasn't much of a success, although the concept is original enough: turn-based multiplayer where you manage an unethical software company to global domination. Wonder if Bill Gates ever played this one?

BLACK THORN (2001)
A stand-alone expansion pack for Rogue Spear that brings home just how much those graphics have dated. Still, the gameplay is still there, which is good news – the same team is making Raven Shield. The premise is also quite good: a group of extremists are going round the world recreating famous terrorist acts.

GHOST RECON (2001)
Brilliant translation of the Rainbow Six gameplay into military scenarios in wide-open spaces. Tense and atmospheric with some nice RPG touches, Ghost Recon also adds some impressive visuals, especially in the character models and death animations. The add-on pack Desert Siege should be out by now.

Not much in the way of concrete news on missions, but we know one is set in London.

THE AMAZING NAME GENERATOR

HOW TO COME UP WITH A TOM CLANCY TITLE

Many moons ago – about the same time the first *Rainbow Six* game was released, in fact – our writer Charlie Brooker came up with an Indiana Jones title generator. It must have been quite an invention, since it seems someone has been using a Tom Clancy title generator ever since. The novels might be a bit more imaginatively titled, but the games have all been named using the same system. Just take a word from the first column, match it to one in the second column and you have yourself a game. You can even do it the other way round. Hell, just put any two words together.

Tom Clancy's...

Rogue	Chap
Hilarious	Sandwich
Fruity	Helmet
Steel	Pencil
Manly	Shower
Old	Uncle
Dirty	Goat
Purple	Claw
Hairy	Tomato
Golden	Ring

game, like story, game design, characters, weapons and so on, and all important decisions are made with their input."

Still, it would be nice to see some of the improvements that *Ghost Recon* introduced adapted for *Raven Shield*, like the RPG elements and the unlocking of specialists. No final decisions have been made, however. "Before introducing features of *Ghost Recon* in *Rainbow Six*, we need to test them and see the effects on the gameplay and all the repercussions it may create. So, right now, nothing has been decided on that topic."

Another *Ghost Recon* feature that could rear its useful head is the ability to lie down and shuffle along the floor. A

teaser trailer released on the game's website showed an agent in a prone position, immediately sparking a furious debate on fan forums (OK, maybe furious is too strong a word) as to whether this was a good thing or not. Ubi Soft is as yet undecided and are testing the possibility. Another approach they are currently exploring (which has been another big discussion point among fans) is whether to show the weapon on screen or not. A lot of people find that running around in first-person with no visual representation of your weapon and just the reticule in front of you doesn't feel right. Then there's the people – the real hardcore realists – who think the angle at which the

weapons are held in FPSs is totally unrealistic. If a gun visual is included it will definitely be optional.

One aspect that has finally been decided is the non-inclusion of a third-person view – present in all other *Rainbow Six* games – on the grounds that it isn't realistic and is used primarily to cheat by swinging the camera round corners. Instead there will be gadgets that let you do that (as in *SWAT 3*).

GUNS, CARS AND BIRDS

Like most people involved in making shooters, Mathieu Ferland is very enthusiastic about the weapons. Someone should alert the authorities about this unhealthy obsession among developers. "We are investing a lot

of time trying to get the real feeling and real sounds of the weapons," he says, almost hopping with excitement. "We are working with some fantastic people who will probably make *Raven Shield* the most realistic game in terms of weapon handling." It's probably that fixation with realism – as well as time restrictions – that prevents *Raven Shield* from including useable vehicles. You might think that having cars and trucks around whose doors won't open and which you can't drive isn't very realistic, but the Red Storm ethic meant that they would only consider including driveable vehicles in *Ghost Recon* if they handled just like the real thing, and the same principal applies here. So, until they have the time and money to make a tactical shooter which is also a driving sim, we won't be seeing that feature just yet. Besides, as Mathieu rightly says: "This is a close-quarter battle game, not a war game, and vehicles are not that important in a counter-terrorism intervention once you're on the site. We feel it is better to focus on things that will immerse the player more."

Although *Raven Shield* is also being developed for the Xbox, PC gamers needn't worry about the game being dumbed down to make it more of a console experience. Ubi Soft assures us that they are making no concessions visually or in the gameplay, mainly because the Microsoft console is powerful enough to handle it all.

Finally, if you're wondering just what the hell a Raven Shield really is, you'll have to play the finished game to find out. "In *Rogue Spear*, you had to actually play the game a while to find out what 'Rogue Spear' meant (something about a stray nuclear warhead if we remember correctly). We'd like to keep the same experience for the player in *Raven Shield*," says Mathieu. "You'll just have to find out for yourself."

Well, I for one can't wait to find out. This looks like it's shaping up to be another big year for tactical shooters, with the likes of *Hidden & Dangerous 2* and *SWAT 4* also in the works. Who says games are dumbing down? **PCZ**

There's a highly trained team in there somewhere.

The Elder Scrolls III
MORROWIND

The greatest opportunities of Vardenfell lie in its untapped wealth, its rich mines and ancient treasures, its unexplored and unclaimed lands. And even its threats represent limitless opportunity to any bold adventurer determined enough to fight and scheme his way to distinction, earning the attention of the great lords and wizards of Morrowind.

You Write the Story

Best RPG of E3
-Computer Gaming World

Top 20 Games of E3
-GameSpot

#1 Xbox Game of E3
-Gamesmania

Elder Scrolls Series
-GameSpy Hall of Fame

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SOFTWORKS INC.

www.elderscrolls.com

PC
CD
ROM

Ubi Soft
ENTERTAINMENT

Ladies and gentlemen, introducing the all new 3D *C&C* game *C&C: Generals*.

Building...

COMMAND & CONQUER: GENERALS

**It's 3D, it's RTS and it's *Command & Conquer*. But is it totally new?
Martin Korda gives the details**

THE DETAILS
DEVELOPER EA Pacific/Westwood
PUBLISHER EA
WEBSITE http://westwood.ea.com/
OUT October 2002

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?
■ *C&C* in 3D
■ All-new world and storyline
■ Multiple strategic nuances
■ Myriad of new units

IT'S ABOUT TIME. After almost ten years, four games, and innumerable add-on packs, the *Command & Conquer* franchise is finally moving into 3D, rejuvenated by developer EA Pacific (a branch of Westwood), who brought us the excellent *Red Alert 2* add-on pack *Yuri's Revenge*. But as you're about to find out, that's not the only change from this, the most famous RTS series. In fact, things couldn't be more different, so forget everything you know about the previous games, lock it in a wooden casket and fire it into space, never to be seen again. It's all change on planet *C&C*, and if you're hankering for more of the same then don't bother applying for citizenship.

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE
Possibly the most striking difference (other than the obvious aesthetic one, which I'll come to later) is that *C&C: Generals* will not be based in the *C&C* world we're all familiar with, where NOD and GDI forces battled for world supremacy. Neither will it be based on a power struggle between Communist Russia and the Allies, as envisioned by the *Red Alert* games. No, in fact from what we've seen and heard so far, *Generals* couldn't be further removed from the *C&C* universe if it tried. Really hard. Even if it cheated, in fact. Which means, no more bald-headed paedophile-looking terrorist leaders. No more smudged-looking 2D isometric graphics which patronise your £300 graphics card. No more Stalin or Einstein, no more mad scientists with names that sound like bowel movements, and no more buxom Tanya flashing her cleavage gratuitously at the camera in a vain attempt to cover up her lack of acting ability. No, forget all that and instead take my hand (nothing pervy you understand), and follow me into a new world – the world of *C&C: Generals*.

A GENERAL GIST
It's 2020, or thereabouts, and a terrorist organisation called the Global Liberation Army is threatening world peace (whatever that is). By some unexplained means, the GLA have gained access to Chinese military hardware as well as devastating biochemical weapons, and is using these resources to power its numerous terrorist activities in and around the Chinese borders. In this futuristic world, the Chinese government is filled with young forward-thinking pinkos with capitalist intentions, who promptly realise that their ambitions to turn China into a major economic and military world power can only be realised once the terrorists have been dealt with. And as if you couldn't have guessed, it's only a matter of time till the Americans stick their noses into the whole situation, by helping out the Chinese.

THREE, TWO, ONE...
Generals will be split up into three, ten-mission campaigns – one for each of the

Each of the three sides will have a unique selection of weaponry.

"No more smudged 2D isometric graphics which patronise your £300 graphics card"

three sides – all of which will come with their own set of goals and unique selection of military hardware. However, you'll also have to contend with the restrictions that each one throws up. The Americans, ever concerned with public opinion, will place more importance on troop preservation, generally making them more powerful, but conversely more expensive than those of the Chinese. The GLA on the other hand are fanatics that will stop at nothing to gain victory, even if it means the massacre of hundreds of their own troops.

To aid you in your struggle for freedom, you'll be provided with a selection of hi-tech, somewhat futuristic and at times ludicrous weaponry with which to annihilate the enemy. Team USA will be stocked up with cutting-edge technology, including a hovering tank called the Crusader, with a laser-firing sidekick drone. Hovering tanks? Who cares?. Where are the bloody double-turreted, rocket-launcher mounted Mammoth Tanks, that could bulldoze their way through walls? Now that was a tank. Still, could work I suppose. However, the Crusader sounds nothing less than inspired when compared to US Detention Camp, which comes fitted with a 'demoraliser' ray gun which gathers the

A SAGE MOVE

C&C: Generals has used rendering technology from the Renegade engine.

EA Pacific has borrowed heavily from the *Command & Conquer: Renegade* engine, utilising its W3D-rendering technology to complement its very own 3D engine. The combination of the two is being called the Sage engine. The development team is extremely excited at the prospect of finally having a platform on which to show off their artistic ability, since many members of the team were restricted by the isometric nature of previous *C&C* games. We've also been promised panoramic replays when something notable happens on the battlefield, such as a massive explosion to heighten the mood. It's still undecided though as to whether the game will feature rendered cut-scenes or acted FMV sequences. However, with the dynamic lighting, some superb shadow, smoke and reflective effects, as well as the new graphical dimension – for the first time in *C&C* history, you should truly feel involved in the action once it kicks off. At least that's what we've been told anyway.

Day and night cycles will cause moving shadows as each day progresses and new tactical opportunities once night falls.

"Plenty of exciting weapons which will have all you sadists bulging at the crotch"

mood of your captives and fires it at enemy troops in order to reduce their morale. I shit you not. Apparently, this concentration camp is based on Camp X-Ray in Guantanamo Bay (perhaps EA Pacific know something about it that we don't). It's as yet unconfirmed whether you'll be able to give your institutions equally ridiculous names (such as Camp Colonoscopy or Camp Echocardiograph), or whether you'll get the option of stringing up the inmates and beating the soles of their feet with cables wrapped in razor wire. We'll have to wait and see.

However, fear not, as there are plenty of exotic and exciting weapons of destruction which will have all you sadists bulging at the crotch. The Aurora strike fighter – a supersonic bomber – sounds particularly impressive, as it carries a devastating airburst bomb which will inflict massive area damage, while the B-52 bomber will give carpet-layers the world over endless satisfaction. What's more, each airborne unit will come fitted with its very own pilot, who can eject, take over an enemy vehicle and find their way back to safety. How nice.

LIKE A LEAD BALLOON

The Chinese arsenal is an equally mixed bag. High points include the Seismic tank (an enormous double-turreted machine which fires concussion rounds) and the Inferno Cannon, a cumbersome fire-spitting metal beast. Unfortunately there are a couple of duds in here too, namely the Propaganda Blimp. If reports are to be believed this will fly above your troops in battle, and inspire them to greater feats by broadcasting propaganda messages through its speakers – which let's face it,

is verging on the ridiculous. You can just picture it can't you? There you are in the midst of battle, your best friend wheezing his last in your arms when some jumped-up commie in a Zeppelin starts bellowing words of encouragement at you through a megaphone, urging you to shoot your People's gun at the People's enemy's head. I don't know about you, but I'd shoot the bastard myself and be done with it. Then again it's early days yet, and with some luck this option will see some work before the final version ships.

Finally we have the GLA, whose selection is looking by far the most entertaining of the three. The Angry Mob sounds particularly amusing. Comprising around 20 angry proles, armed to the cavities with Molotov cocktails and rocks, they'll throw their makeshift weapons at any nearby enemies. What's more, you'll be able to link up several of these groups to form a fully fledged riot. This is much more like it. Technicals – trucks with mounted machine guns – are also a welcome and novel addition to the GLA

HONOUR THYSELF

EA Pacific has paid close attention to the comments of *C&C* fans while developing the multiplayer side of *C&C: Generals*, and hope to make it more accessible than the previous games in the series – even including an amateur league for newbies. EA Pacific is also hoping to throw in some scripted co-op games too, which will be a first, but a welcome one at that. For those of you who fancy yourselves as a bit of a commanding genius, then there'll be a host of Honors for you to collect for outstanding feats such as vanquishing your opponent in under a minute, along with the incredible sense of self-importance and smugness which automatically goes with such an achievement.

Generals **is already looking pretty impressive.**

set-up. Best of all though is the ability of the GLA to create a complex labyrinth of underground tunnels, enabling rapid troop movement in the safety of an underground confine. Work continues on multiple other weapons for the three sides, and we'll be bringing you more on them as and when the info oozes out of EA's tightly sealed offices.

COMMANDING RESPECT
One thing that EA Pacific seems particularly proud of is its all-new command system. Unlike in past *C&C* games where you had to make do with whatever units you had at your disposal, you'll now be able to specialise in certain areas by selecting one of three 'Commands' before the inception of each mission – which will in turn provide you with a set of advantages and disadvantages. While the GLA and Chinese 'Commands' are still undecided, the US ones are all but finalised.

The first of these is the Nato Tank Command, whereby your land-based units ship with bonuses (20 per cent cheaper production costs and immediate veteran status), but all other units are 20 per cent more expensive. You'll also be given access to a new unit, the Leopard Tank – versatile and built with a mounted anti-personnel machine gun. The US Air Force Command (which gives you a stealth bomber as your bonus weapon) works in much the same way, in that your production of aircraft is 20 per cent cheaper and all air units are immediately allotted veteran status. You'll also be given the ability to steal enemy planes and make them your own. Finally, there's the Special Forces Command, whereby commandos will be 20 per cent cheaper and base defenses, 20 per cent dearer. A deadly army ranger, who can not only shut down the power to enemy bases, but can also be parachuted behind enemy lines, will be your specialist unit if you choose this path.

NEW SHOES, SAME SOCKS?
But this is all very well and good. New graphics. Great. New units. Excellent. What about the gameplay? Ahhh, you see, I was just coming to that part. And rest assured, we're being promised plenty of nuances in this very department. First off is the new command interface, which has been completely revamped. The age-old vertical interface of games-gone-by is to be replaced by an intuitive horizontal one which will allow information to be gathered and orders dispatched far more rapidly. Clicking on a building will now reveal all the options available from that structure, considerably simplifying base and unit construction. And in an attempt to make units less one-dimensional, EA Pacific has decided to incorporate unit upgrades. AK-47s for the Angry Mob being just one such example.

Resource management and building construction have also received overhauls. Each side will start out with a bulldozer, which acts as your construction vehicle (funny, but I've always been under the impression that bulldozers were meant for knocking things down). These can erect new buildings anywhere on the map, as opposed to just within your base. EA Pacific is hoping that this will open up a whole new array of tactical possibilities in *Generals*. Let's hope it does. Resource collecting will revolve around pick-up trucks and supply depots. As I said before, there's no Tiberium here, only warehouses full of building materials which will be transported back to your base by convoys of lorries. While it's hardly a gargantuan step from the method adopted by previous *C&C* games, at least it's a stab at adding some variety.

BLACK HOLE SUPERNOVA
Like a fading actress, once adored by fans, now laughed at in the streets for her succession of movie flops and unattractive folds, the *C&C* series has taken a few knocks over the last few years. Hopefully *C&C: Generals* will be the tonic, the elixir of youth to a fading gaming star, signalling a triumphant return to form and a beautiful 3D makeover for the world's best known RTS series. From what we've seen and heard so far, it's in with a chance, although the competition is set to get ever greater with the likes of *Medieval: Total War* and *Warcraft III* almost upon us. But the question remains: will *C&C* fans accept this strange new world, one bereft of Tiberium, or any connection to the previous titles? Will they fall to the floor and pound the earth with scab-covered fists and shout: "It's not *C&C* anymore." Or will they rejoice in its new birth and angle, crying out: "*C&C* in 3D. It's about bloody time." To poach a quote from *Red Alert*: "Only time will tell." PCZ
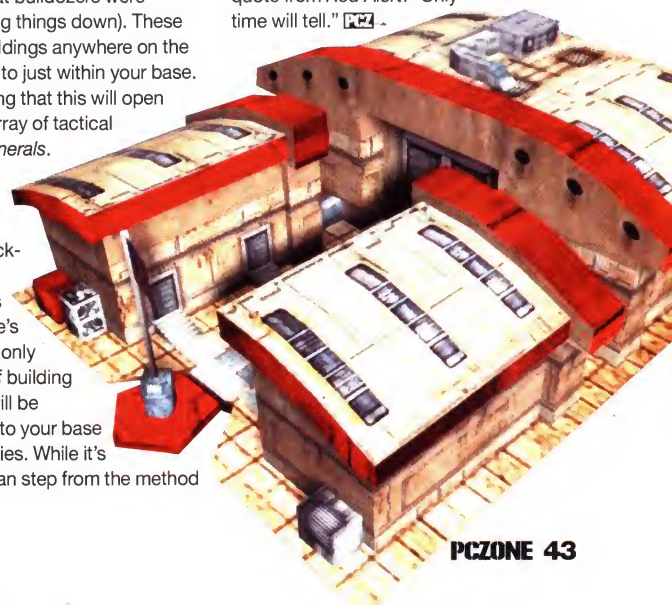
THE DETAILS
DEVELOPER Gearbox Software
PUBLISHER VU Games
WEBSITE www.gearboxsoftware.com
OUT April

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?
- It's *Counter-Strike* with highly intelligent bots
- Revamped engine
- New weapons
- AI which learns from its mistakes

CV

GEARBOX SOFTWARE

Gearbox are one of the most respected developers in recent PC history. Here are some of their achievements.

2000 *Half-Life: Opposing Force* – Considered by most, including us, to be the best *Half-Life* add-on pack to date.

2001 *Half-life: Blue Shift* – Considered by most, including us, to be an entertaining but overly short *Half-Life* add-on pack. Originally meant to be a free download.

2002 *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3* – See our review on page 78.

Slap your bots up

UPDATE

COUNTER-STRIKE: CONDITION ZERO

***Martin Korda* spent three days on a bus and ferry and all he saw was this incredible team-based first-person shooter**

AT 6.30AM on a winter's day, Paris isn't quite so gay. Waking from three hours of restless, alcohol-fuelled sleep, to find a comatose Steve Hill less than a foot away in an adjacent bed, rasping like an overheating electric saw, glasses precariously hanging off one ear in a pool of his own drool – only makes it worse. But while spirits may have been creaking like a cheap hotel bed, hopes within our party of 15 dishevelled UK journalists were high, as we were transported in a rickety coach – portaloo already brimming with four types of human excretion from the previous day's cross-Channel journey – to our destination, an aristocratically eccentric chateau which was to host the annual VU Games press show.

After four and a half hours, we arrived at the grandiose building, and were promptly ushered out of the vehicle by clucking Frenchmen towards the galleries housing a host of VU Games developers demonstrating their wares to the press. Throngs of pallid, under-nourished journos shunted their way from one

room to the next as Hill and I peeled off in opposite directions. We had work to do. My mission – to track down legendary developer Randy Pitchford, who, it was rumoured, was as big as a giant and had a rocket launcher for an arm.

SEEING IS BELIEVING
Visibility was down to a minimum as I eked my way through swathes of bodies, matted together with sweat and spilt coffee towards the Gearbox stand showing *Counter-Strike: Condition Zero*, the single-player version of the greatest online shooter of our time. Suddenly it appeared, looming from the greyness like a beacon to the lost, drawing in slack-jawed observers like fireflies to a lantern. Standing in front of me, was the man himself, Mr Randy Pitchford, not a bazooka-toting behemoth, but an affable enthusiastic man, speaking to a pair of buck-toothed Ren and Stimpey lookalikes.

I watched for a while as a manic bot-filled firefight kicked off on one of *CZ's*

impressive-looking new levels, where shards of debris flew off every surface as mis-aimed bullets thudded into walls. During a lull in the action, I took the opportunity to ask how you, as the commander of your team of special forces soldiers, would be able to interact with your comrades.

"When we started work on *Condition Zero*, we found that there were two approaches to solving the problem of a command interface. The first of these is getting your team to do what you want. Developing this kind of FPS is no longer about being alone in the world – it's about developing a team-based single-player game and making the AI believable, plausible and fun. One of the key problems is making sure the guys don't look like idiots, and doing what you want them to. Basically they should be enhancing your experience of the game, not counteracting it," explained Randy chirpily. Like a newborn I wedged myself between the two animated hunks of flesh that stood either

A TALE OF TWO INTERFACES

side of me to get a better view. Things were beginning to get interesting.

Randy was now in an ebullient mood so I thrust my Dictaphone nearer to his face to record his every word. "We've actually used two interfaces instead of one. For the first one, we've developed a complicated system which allows you to directly give orders to your team-mates, such as getting one bot to take point. We decided it was important that we give the player some direct control over what their team-mates do. Once the mission starts, it's chaos, and both human and computer-controlled players will care primarily about survival and their objective. So a lot of the time, the bots will be making their own decisions about what's going to keep them alive and what's going to get the job done. However, as you're the squad leader, sometimes you'll have to make the

all-important decisions and that's where the direct command system comes in." And what about the second approach to interacting with your team-mates? "The other approach to solving the problem is to get the AI to take a look at both what the player and the other AI characters are doing, as well as the way the map is built, and from this figure out what the smartest decisions are. An example of this is walking into an open area where there is potential to be sniped. So the first

bot will go to a certain point and cover the next guy as he makes his way to the same spot, so that the whole group moves together like a real military unit." Coo.

He wasn't wrong either. Gesturing for me to have a go, I clutched the controls in

tepid palms, cocksure that my years of office *Counter-Strike* sessions would put me in good stead for the trials ahead. Twenty seconds later, I was dead, decapitated by a well placed LAW rocket. Eager to make amends I tried again, attempting to outflank the enemy with my

"These bots are very different. Lifelike some might say"

squad of three highly trained soldiers. It was then I noticed it. The bots in *CZ* aren't some mookish collection of pre-defined brainwashed drones, conforming to a set of poorly comprised AI routines and scripts. No-no-no-no-no! These bots are

The new riot shield protects most of your front (bar your lower legs). Kinda neat.

very different. Lifelike some might say. They worked together in a well-organised team, opting for differing routes depending on their past experiences. These are written to a file which tells them what kind of things happened when they played before, negating any chance of predictability and on this occasion, scuppering my feeble and poorly thought out plans for an ambush.

TOURS OF DUTY
Randy then informed me that hardened *Counter-Strike* veterans will be in for a

GETTING ONLINE

Those of you worried that you won't be able to run your existing version of *Counter-Strike* with *CZ* servers, fear not. There'll be a patch available, which we'll be running on our CDs and DVD just as soon as it shows up. This will update your version, so that you'll be able to join in with and against bots on online games. Improvements will include better weapon balancing, and maybe even the hi-res graphics upgrade which shipped with *Half-Life: Blue Shift* (though this is still being discussed). I asked Randy whether there'd be any full zonal damage in *CZ*. "Not in this game, but we'll probably see that in *Counter-Strike 2*." You know where you heard it first.

"Who wants some then?"

stern test, while partially solidified FPS players will find even some of the earlier levels, seriously challenging. "When playing against the bots, many hardened *CS* players who've been testing the game haven't been able to tell the difference between them and human players," bragged Randy. The man wasn't talking crap either, as he and his Bot mates proved by battling frantically to extinguish an enemy stronghold. Such was the tension, in fact, that while we watched the action unfold, the Stimpy lookalike started shaking uncontrollably with excitement, buck teeth knocking violently against his kneecaps, dislodging pieces of his lunch and sending them arching off in random directions as he trembled. Picking out a piece of cold fish which had lodged itself in my ear, I asked Randy to tell us a bit about the new types of missions, and some of the new mission goals we could expect to see in *CZ*.

"We've put in many new objectives in each mission, alongside old ones like defusing bombs. These new goals may involve getting your whole squad from one side of the map to the other without losing a single man. So you have to start thinking about how to play each level differently. In this case you may send one man out as a decoy, while the rest of you take another path." As if to confirm this, Randy set about stealthily negotiating a derelict-looking level, full of decrepit crumbling buildings, sending off a sniper to distract the advancing terrorist scum – some armed with riot shields, others with Molotov Cocktails – while he and the rest of the team headed off in the opposite direction. Once the level was complete a wry smile tinted with smugness crossed his face for the briefest of moments before composure returned and the demonstration continued.

"We started thinking about the way most people use the same weapon every time. So another objective may be trying to complete a mission where every member of the team is forced to use the same weapon. This throws up a totally different tactical situation. In any given mission there are nine objectives and each of these is divided into modes. The narrative mode will involve the classic types of mission goals such as defusing

a bomb, rescuing hostages and planting surveillance equipment. Then there's the challenge mode, where you may have to get five kills using just the shield and the pistol. This means you'll have to get very skilled with a handgun. If you achieve this you'll get more money for the next mission, meaning you can recruit more guys, train the ones you already have and purchase heavier weaponry. Certain soldiers specialise in certain skills, so

"And I'm not coming down until you apologise."

"Many players testing the game can't tell the difference between the bots and the human players"

RANDY PITCHFORD
PRESIDENT OF GEARBOX SOFTWARE

"Have a toke on that mate."

someone with a high accuracy potential will be worth investing in as he has the potential to become an incredible sniper."

I HEAR YOU

Suddenly a high-pitched squeal cut its way through my ear drums, emanating from the back of the rabble of journos which had, unbeknown to me, converged on the *CZ* stand, behind which stood the other developers, vacant, confused and unsure of what to do next while everyone ignored them. "Tell me vich new aaarierth offf combat zer vill be in game?" came the cry. What? Fortunately Randy understood. "There are six regions. South American jungles with drug lords, the Middle East with loads of terrorist

missions, urban European, the Far East, Arctic regions of Russia and the United States. Each territory will have three or four missions. In each one there are nine different objectives. So overall, there are about 200 mission goals in the whole game. Newcomers will be taken care of with an in-depth tutorial." Not bad, we all agreed, nodding sagely at one another now in a kind of brainwashed union, assimilating every word Randy spoke and marvelling at the game before us. But Randy, undeterred by the bobbing heads, was intent on pushing on. Happily and in a hushed silence we let him continue, watching as he brought up the intuitive new menu system and demonstrating the ease with which you'll be able to buy new weaponry and train your team.

"When you start the game you'll only have a little bit of money, so the first few missions will be solo affairs, probably armed with some kind of pistol. As you start making money though, you can recruit guys to join your team and buy yourself better weapons."

"And what of the bots? What skills will they have?" I enquired, voice resounding like a bomb through the room. "Glad you mentioned that actually, great question." Smug grin from Martin. Moans of hatred from everyone else. "There are ten skills, five of which are exposed for training, which include small arms, demolitions, rifles, tactics and awareness. This last one is their ability to react to the sounds that they hear,

such as knowing what weapons are being fired at them. Knowing things like this will affect their behaviour. It's a bit like combat experience. The tactics skill represents their ability to communicate with each other and move together as a unit."

Glancing at my watch it became apparent I had stayed too long. I'd seen what I'd come to see and heard what I'd hoped I'd hear. *Condition Zero* was looking little short of stunning, with an engine so brilliantly enhanced that it was barely discernable from the original *Half-Life* one. As I pushed my way through the rabble, I threw a cursory and somewhat sympathetic glance to the man at the *Nascar 2002* stand, isolated and ignored bar one suited man who stood like a wax figurine, holding a gaming wheel steady at a slight leftwards angle. The verdict was clear. No game on show that day could come close to competing, and as I clambered back on the bus, I realised that any team-based first-person shooter out this year would have trouble doing so too. And I couldn't help but smile at the knowledge that *PC ZONE* would be running the exclusive review of *Condition Zero* next issue, and the exclusive demo the issue after. And so another press trip was over, ending the way each one does, with a three-hour trip to a pub and a coachload of bedraggled, sweating, balding men without proper jobs, falling into a coma as they waited for their next gaming, alcoholic, or as it turned out on this occasion, pornographic hit. Well, this was Paris after all… **PCZ**

TUNING ENGINES

IT'S THE *HALF-LIFE* ENGINE, BUT NOT AS WE KNOW IT

The *Half-Life* engine has, as you're probably well aware, been around for a fair few years. However, while *Condition Zero* runs on this very engine, Gearbox has enhanced it so much that it's virtually indiscernible from its original incarnation. From the abundance of background detail to the real-world physics engine in which glass shatters and fragments of wall fly in all directions when hit by speeding bullets, just about every part of the engine has been revamped and improved. And with 75 per cent more polygons, high-resolution textures and improved fog and weapon effects, you're sure to be in for a visual treat as soon as the action kicks off.

Counter-Strike as it looked before.

Counter-Strike as it looks now.

It's Siberia, it's cold, you're low on lippy and all you've got to wear is a leather catsuit. What's a girl to do? Well, shoot gun-toting Soviets it seems.

CV MONOLITH

MONOLITH

Around since 1994, Monolith's LithTech engine was originally designed for Microsoft games. Microsoft lost interest – the fools.

1997 *Blood* and *Blood 2: The Chosen*. Reasonable, if generic, attempt at the FPS genre.

1998 *Shogo Mobile Armour Division*. 3D action in an animé-inspired universe. Richie quite liked it.

2000 *Sanity: Aiken's Artefact*. Isometric 3D action involving psychic powers. Quite.

2001 *No One Lives Forever*. The game that launched Cate Archer on the world. The world shrugged.

2002 *Aliens Vs Predator 2*. One of the scariest games ever made. Be afraid.

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Monolith
PUBLISHER Vivendi
WEBSITE www.noonelivesforever.com
OUT TBC

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Pending nuclear holocaust
- Greater emphasis on stealth
- Improved AI
- Nice arse

She's back in leather...
NO ONE LIVES FOREVER 2

No one except for super-spy Cate Archer, it would appear. And *Steve Hill*, of course

IT'S NOT A name that readily lends itself to a sequel, is it? To paraphrase early Steve Coogan creation, Paul Calf: "It's a paradox, you daft twat." Probably more important is whether the game is worthy of revisiting, as the original wasn't without its critics, not least this magazine. Essentially a '60s spy spoof, *No One Lives Forever* was a curious blend of camp humour and sickening violence in which you assumed the role of The Operative, otherwise known as leggy brunette, Cate Archer.

Predictably, having an attractive female lead character offered numerous opportunities for out of work actresses to earn a few quid by dressing up as the character at promotional events. Nothing changes, and on the day we saw *NOLF2* our attention was drawn by the sight of a stunning model who appeared to have been poured into a white leather catsuit. Even more distracting was the fact that that she was frolicking with a man-sized bandicoot. It's a good job I'm off the acid.

Anyway, such was the diversion that we almost missed Monolith producer Kevin Stevens' opening line: "It's a similar type of story. It builds on top of what people already know, but if you haven't played the first game then it's OK. The bad guys are H.A.R.M. again, and H.A.R.M. is up to no good – it's got some world-destroying plan."

With upgraded AI, you'll see guards taking a nap or having a cuppa. But if they don't like the taste of Tetley's, how about offering some high-velocity bullets?

That plan involves no less than a top secret Soviet project with the potential to bring about a Third World War. And if that wasn't weight enough to place upon Archer's slender shoulders, H.A.R.M. has also ordered the world's deadliest assassins to take her out, and we don't mean for a fish supper.

HIDE AND SNEAK
So how is a girl to stay out of H.A.R.M.'s way? Well, she could always hide. *NOLF2* will offer more opportunities for stealth than the original, including the ability to lean around corners. This should make it easier to avoid enemies, who can also be safely observed from hiding places. Even once you're detected, pursuers can be outwitted and thrown off the trail.

Skulking isn't compulsory though, and it should still be possible to adopt a gun-blazing approach. As Stevens says: "It depends how good you are, but if you're a really good FPS guy you could play 'guns out'. But generally, I combine a little bit of stealth, a little bit of guns out. But I think once you've played through a couple of levels you could replay those levels stealthily."

In keeping with the spoof spy theme, the first game's weaponry was augmented by some frankly improbable gadgetry. Body Remover Powder, anyone? Expect more of the same in the sequel, with Archer's armoury including a crossbow and some Japanese throwing stars, aided and abetted by the HR-4 Ladies' Compact Code Breaker and a pocket-sized lipstick spy camera in tulip – Cate's favourite shade, apparently.

Such poppycock has drawn obvious comparisons with the films of James Bond and Austin Powers, but according to the developer there is a greater cinematic influence: "Have you seen the movie, *In Like Flint*? James Coburn. It's kinda what we're aiming at."

Made in 1967 – the same time period as the *NOLF* universe – it's loosely an American take on Bond, and well worth seeking out (if you're really bored and don't have a job).

TRAVEL AGENT
There would be no fun in being a spy if you couldn't rack up a few air miles, and *NOLF2* will include such diverse locales as a feudal Japanese estate, a Soviet

military installation in the Siberian tundra, the exotic streets of India, and the trailer parks of Buttpoke, Ohio. All of which should give plenty of scope to reprise the crass racial stereotyping of the first game.

Each place will feature an indigenous enemy, such as devious Ninjas, Tulwar-wielding Indian assassins, and machine-gun toting Soviet soldiers. Having played through part of the Siberia level, we can confirm the existence of this last bunch, although they're not toting anything now as they have all been shot squarely in the temple or stomach, either picked off at range or mown down in a hail of bullets.

Using the LithTech engine, it didn't seem drastically different from the first game, but apparently the major area of improvement is the AI. Accordingly, enemies will each have unique goals, such as guarding a safe or unloading a truck.

However, objects in the area can trigger their own internal urges. For instance, a guard could be tempted to nip off for a cup of coffee, or even take a quick nap in a comfy chair. The interactive environment can also be utilised by the player, but not always to their advantage. Leaving a door open or clumsily kicking over a bottle would cause enemies to investigate, for example, whereas unscrewing light bulbs could create a handy hiding place.

Whatever happens, you can be sure that Cate will be looking her best, although of course being a first-person game you won't actually be able to see her, except in cut-scenes. Seeking inspiration, I mindlessly ask an American PR woman who would win in a hypothetical fight with Lara Croft. "Cate Archer!" she squawks. "Cate Archer would win. She's got more brains." You heard it here first. **PCZ**

> ## "Cate's armoury includes a pocket-sized lipstick spy camera in tulip – her favourite shade, apparently"

A Siberian farmhouse, yesterday.

With a massive game world and near infinite possibilities *Morrowind* could be one of the first truly non-linear RPGs.

Respect your elders...

THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND

Everybody needs somebody and in *Morrowind*, *Keith Pullin* might just find them

RIGHT THEN, before we start let's make one thing perfectly clear: if you think this is going to be just another first-person RPG with bug-eyed goblins, bleak dungeons and peculiarly named Elven kings, think again.

Morrowind is about as far removed from your regular RPG as you can possibly get. It features so many different character classes and races we felt dizzy just scrolling through the list. There are also around 27 specialist skills to master, and that's not including the stacks of scrolls and spells. Frankly, the scope for both character creation and advancement is RPG heaven, but then we shouldn't really be surprised when Ken Rolston, designer of classic pen-and-paper RPG adventures for the likes of Paranoia and Warhammer is *Morrowind*'s lead designer.

And in time-honoured pen-and-paper fashion, *Morrowind* will also be totally non-linear. But we don't just mean *Baldur's Gate*-style non-linear where you have a certain amount of choice as to what order you complete the quests in.

No, no, no. We are talking proper non-linear, in so far as you can attempt whatever quest you like, at whatever point you desire. That is if you even want to do the quests at all...

WHAT QUESTS?

The beauty of this RPG is that you have a choice. The main story contains dozens of missions and around 100 hours of game time. If, however, that sounds too restrictive for you, you can break free from the shackles of the plot and embark on your own freeform adventure into the unknown and return to the main story whenever you like.

Morrowind lets you roam free across ten square miles of land allowing you to live your life how you see fit. If you want to survive as a hermit in a forest gathering berries to sell at a local market, then you can. If you want to be a mercenary fighting for some dubious political cause, you can. If you want to be an assassin, mage, thief or even drug dealer then go right ahead and do your worst. *Morrowind*

> **"*Morrowind* lets you roam free across ten square miles of land allowing you to live your life how you see fit"**

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Bethesda Softworks
PUBLISHER Ubi Soft
WEBSITE www.morrowind.com
OUT April 2002

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

■ Looks fantastic
■ Incredible array of character classes and skills
■ Totally non-linear and open-ended
■ Create your own world and quests with powerful game editor
■ Real-time weather as well as a night/day cycle

Avoid dark and scary places – you might get hurt.

"Where d'ya get your armour you flash git?" Yep, there really are some snazzy costumes around.

offers a near infinite amount of possibilities in a world teeming with opportunity. What we have here could well be the *Elite* of fantasy RPGs.

It's also worth bearing in mind that everything you do affects the world in some way, especially when it comes to interacting with other humans, orcs, or whatever. There are 2,000 NPCs spread across 30 towns who react to you depending on whether or not they like you.

For example, if you upset or even kill somebody of a particular guild or faction, their peers are unlikely to greet you with a warm, toothless smile and a pint of Dragon Froth. Accordingly, if you try and ask them about anything, whether it's directions to the local herbalist or important quest information they'll simply snub you, or worse, decapitate you. Of course, you could always resort to threats if you're skilled in the art of intimidation...

DOWN TO THE LAKE I FEAR

And then there are the graphics. Traditionally RPG graphics engines blow chunks, and very big chunks at that. *Deus Ex* pioneered a change in that department a year or so ago, but Bethesda has now taken the standard to a whole new level. The sheer quality, beauty and variety of the landscape as well as everything in it puts a lot of first-person shooters to shame. As project leader Todd Howard says: "When we

started this project three years ago we were very tired of the way RPGs looked. After all, why shouldn't an RPG look as good as anything else out there?"

Who are we to argue? Using a dramatically modified version of the Net Immerse engine, *Morrowind* is

completely compatible with the GeForce 4 graphics card, and full use has been made of its fabled pixel shading. When you step into water you don't just get an animated splash; you get proper waves that emanate outwards from your location. And when it rains on a lake,
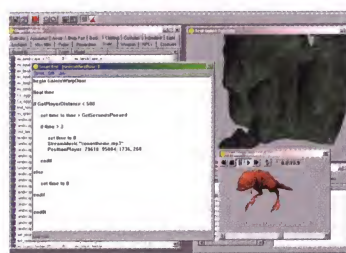
MAKE OR BREAK

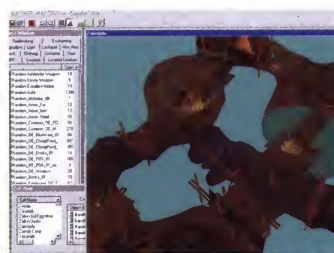### WANT TO BE GOD? FORGET *BLACK & WHITE*, THIS IS HOW YOU DO IT...

The trouble with non-linearity is that it can sometimes lead to a lack of direction and ultimately boredom. *Black & White* has been criticised for exactly this reason. Some gamers even complained that *Elite*, the greatest open-ended game of all time, was just a case of endlessly flying backwards and forwards between a couple of planets with the occasional dogfight thrown in for good measure. Pah! Philistines.

In order to avoid the chances of this happening with *Morrowind*, it comes with its own world editor allowing you to create new quests, change existing quests and even terraform whole new land masses. What's more it looks like it was dead easy to use (we watched project leader Todd Howard create a new quest in a matter of seconds) and quests are fully swappable on the Net.

Looks like those Sunday afternoons will just fly by...

Create your own quests and swap them with your mates.

SCROLLING THROUGH TIME

TRACING THE HISTORY OF THE ELDER SCROLLS...
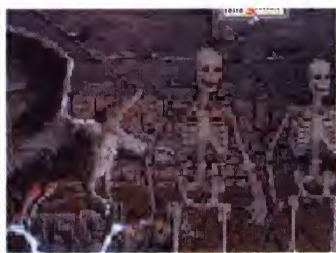
THE ELDER SCROLLS: ARENA (1993)
The first of *The Elder Scrolls* game was big, maybe too big. Boasting 18 character classes, 2,500 magical items, and more than 400 villages, arena rightly scooped awards left, right and centre.

THE ELDER SCROLLS II: DAGGERFALL (1996)
It might not have seemed possible, but three years later *Daggerfall*, the second of the *Elder Scrolls* games, managed to out-size its 'parent', containing more than 200 hours of gameplay and 750,000 characters. On top of that it took two full weeks (real time) to walk from one side of the world to the other. Big? Just a bit.

BATTLESPIRE (1997)
Though not strictly part of *The Elder Scrolls* series *Battlespire* was based in the same world. This FPS allowed players to customise their own magic spells and create a player based on the *Daggerfall* character creation system.

REDGUARD (1998)
Again, an offshoot of *The Elder Scrolls* series that focused on third-person swordfighting. There are more *Redguard* adventures planned – allegedly.

the entire surface is covered with little pockmarks and ripples. There's no doubt about it, witnessing it is one of those seminal gaming moments you never forget.

Of course, not everyone's going to have the luxury of an expensive GeForce 4 card, and the good news is there's plenty to see without one. Most notable is the real-time weather system, including moving clouds and sandstorms. There's also a full night/day cycle complete with spectacular sunrises and sunsets, an idea that apparently came about after a transatlantic flight to the UK. Inspiration can strike in the strangest of places it seems.

DOING IT MY WAY
One thing *Morrowind* won't support is the ability to assemble a party. There are certain quests where somebody might tag along with you for a while and there's even a mage's quest where some NPC workers help you build a tower. Generally speaking though you're on your own. It's also a single-player only game, so you can forget co-op play on the Internet or LAN.

Obviously this means that once you've selected your character class at the start of the game you have to operate within the bounds of that character. A thief will never have the fighting prowess of a dedicated warrior for instance, and so you'd be wise to avoid situations involving combat. Indeed, the typical thief will spend most of their time hopping from rooftop to rooftop looking for potential pick-pocketing prey and doing the odd bit off backstabbing should the opportunity present itself. A well-played thief would never find himself (or herself) in a battle situation anyway.

PURE CLASS
The variety of playing styles is the very crux on which the whole game rests. Thieves actually earn experience and ultimately levels for performing their clandestine tactics; gaining experience by simply killing things just doesn't happen in *Morrowind* – the whole system is much subtler than that.

"Classes are a combination of skills," explains Howard. "You don't raise levels by experience points, you raise them by using skills that are important to your

"Sound the church bells! Bloke in a skirt! Lock up your sons! Bloke in a skirt!"

class." In other words whenever a thief employs stealth skills he'll be vigorously rewarded for it.

Warriors will of course find their skills improving as they make kills, but it's more the fact that they are using a particular weapon or employing a certain fighting technique that rewards them rather than the actual act of killing something.

Ultimately such a system means the gameplay should prove to be a purer role-playing experience than you get in games such as *Baldur's Gate*, where most of your level and skill increases are gained by violence. OK, occasionally in *BG* you gain experience by making character-based yes or no decisions, or by casting a spell or finding a trap, but it's nowhere near the scale of *Morrowind*.

THE SIEGE IS SET
Despite its strengths *Morrowind* still has a couple of major hurdles to overcome if it's to do what its illustrious *Elder Scrolls* predecessors did and scoop a shedload of RPG awards. The first thing it needs is to streamline an interface that, while admittedly unfinished, showed signs of being a handful. Buying and selling in particular caused a fair degree of angst during our afternoon's playtest.

The second and possibly more difficult hurdle comes in the form of *Neverwinter Nights* – due for release at more or less the same time as *Morrowind*. Which of these will eventually rise up to be king is difficult to say, but one thing's for sure, 2002 could be quite a year for RPGs. **PCZ**

Stunning: *Morrowind* **is completely compatible with GeForce 4 graphics cards.**

Q&A
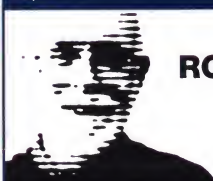
KEN ROLSTOM

We talked to one of the godfathers of RPGs

PCZ What was the first RPG you ever played?
KEN *Tunnels and Trolls* in 1979 which was a mimeographed rip-off of the old *D&D*. Myself and a friend took it to New Hampshire for a weekend and our wives wept bitter tears because we didn't emerge into the outdoor world.

PCZ Did you ever see your wife again?
KEN It's not nearly so tragic. I was mature at that point so I couldn't do that college student thing where you just go into a cocoon.

PCZ What's the difference between East Coast role-playing and central US role-playing?
KEN The central US style is that everybody works together for the good of the party. The Princeton University style of gaming is that you always pay the thief up front 50 per cent of all your loot to keep him from betraying the party.

PCZ When did you first become interested in computer games?
KEN About eight years ago. Warren Spector and I worked together on some Paranoia stuff and he kind of advised me.

PCZ What was the first video game you worked on?
KEN I worked on five computer games that died under me. I worked for a tragically misguided company called Magnet and spent quite a lot of money making games that were maybe not such a good idea at all. I then came to Bethesda and worked on *Battlespire* and then *Redguard*.

PCZ Have you ever been in a real fight before? And we don't just mean against a level 26 mage.
KEN Sure. It was a tragedy. I had the guy down on the floor and then I let him get up out of some misguided sense of chivalry. But then he hit me in the nose and I bled like a suckling pig.

That must have been some road-bump.

Don't try this at home kids.

Caining it '60s-style

THE ITALIAN JOB

If SCi doesn't deliver the goods, *Paul Presley* will turn in his grave. And, likely as not, jump right out of it and kick their teeth in

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Pixelogic
PUBLISHER SCi Games
WEBSITE www.sci.co.uk
OUT April

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Perhaps you've heard of the film?
- *Driver/Midtown Madness*-style auto action
- Not just Mini Coopers to drive, but practically every car in the film
- Drive through London, Turin and the Swiss Alps

THE YEAR 1999 was a wonderful time to be a young go-getter in the games industry. Well I remember touring that year's popular ECTS trade exhibition in London's swanky Olympia, marvelling at all the wonderful games due for release that autumn. Games such as *Max Payne*, *Duke Nukem Forever*, *Prey* and *Warcraft Adventures*. Well, one out of four isn't bad (even if *Max* was a year and a half late).

But the biggest thrill of all came from the most unlikely of sources. Wandering into the SCi booth, mainly to see how they were continuing to flog the dead horse of *Carmageddon*, we were stunned to see the facial visage of Lord Michael of Caine glaring down at us with the words 'The Italian Job' perched above his shoulder as though they

were grafted on at birth. They hadn't gone and actually done it had they? Turned out they had. SCi had snapped up the rights and the game was on its way. And then, just when the fields of Elysium were looming large, the PR rep on the stand hit us with the two cruellest words in the English language: PlayStation only.

Suddenly everything changed. Games no longer seemed quite as fun. The sun didn't shine quite so brightly in the morning. Newborn babies started to get uglier. Porn trends moved from large breasted blondes towards waif-like post-teens with tiny man chests. Things just weren't right with the world anymore. Sure the PR guy assured us that a PC version was being developed, "at the same time", but no one believed him.

The Italian Job meant everything to us at *ZONE*. Our then-editor would forever shout the "bloody doors off" quote whenever anyone did something over the top. Caine posters adorned every filing cabinet in the office. Camp Freddie was the nickname of our art assistant. It was like a hammer blow to our hearts.

AHHH, BLESS

Luckily for us all, the console kidz knew a good thing when it hit them and thanks to the madcap driving romp being a fairly sizeable hit with PlayStation owners, SCi decided to let developers Pixelogic get to work on a PC version. Only a year or so later, but we're patient folk at *ZONE*. Especially if it turns out to be any good.

Dixon of Dock Green it ain't.

First question is obviously how you go about turning a film like *The Italian Job* into a game. The only really obvious bit is the car chase at the end, hardly enough for a whole game. So it would seem, thus Pixelogic has 'interpreted' some of the other aspects of the plot and expanded the horizons a little.

The main game mode is obviously The Job, in which you start by practising the driving moves needed for the heist and recruiting your team. All of which is set in '60s London of course. Cue tearaway chases through notable traffic landmarks such as Trafalgar Square, pursued by *Z Cars*-style coppers.

At heart it's a mission-based driving game in the *Driver* mould. Practise your moves in Blighty, then drive through Italy dealing with the local mafia, pull off the heist in the jam-packed streets of Turin, then finally escape by bus across the Swiss Alps. And we all know what happens then, right?

TICKETY-BOO

It's not just gold heists in Europe though. For those that don't want to risk Mr Bridger's resources straight away, Pixelogic is including several other game modes to try out. Free Driving is pretty much exactly that, driving at your own pace through the pretty scenery, but with all sorts of hidden extras and secret paths to discover. Checkpoint racing puts a *Midtown Madness* spin on the game, while the Stunt Course lets you put the Mini Coopers, luxury sports cars and just about every other vehicle that made an

We won, didn't we?

appearance in the film (even the football van), through their paces in a variety of challenge – most of which involve the car's wheels leaving the ground at some point.

Finally there's the intriguing Party Mode which adds some much-needed multiplayer fun to the proceedings. SCi won't confirm exactly what form this takes (ie whether it's network/Internet-playable or not) but there's not likely to be much chance of any co-op shenanigans with the Turin Polizei. Which would have been fun. On the PlayStation, most of these modes could only be unlocked by completing the main story-based game. Whether the same holds true for the PC version we'll have to wait and see.

Which also goes for the spirit of the game. Driving familiar-looking cars around familiar-looking scenery is one thing. Whether Pixelogic can capture the real essence of the film, the tongue-in-cheek humour, that plain sense of fun and good times, the feel-good factor that surrounds

every viewing of the boys pulling it off is something else entirely. PlayStation gamers are a lot less discerning than we PC owners tend to be, but our hopes are high for this one. Like we said at the start, it means a lot to us.

ONE LAST THING

Incidentally, I've tried to go through this whole preview without regurgitating all those familiar quotes from the film. It's been hard and frankly I don't think I can hold out any longer. So if you'll just indulge me... "You're only supposed to blow the bloody doors off!" "Get your skates on mate!" "Look happy you stupid bastards, we won didn't we?" "Are they big? I like 'em big." "You must have shot an awful lot of tigers..." "...Yes, I used a machine gun." "We're the self-preservation society." "Hold on lads, I've got a great idea." And, of course, "Camp Freddie you all know." Thank you. I feel so much better now. **PCZ**

I think they overloaded the gold.

One way to avoid the speed cameras.

THE CAINE FILES

IF THEY CAN DO IT WITH *THE ITALIAN JOB*, WHY NOT PLUNDER THE REST OF MR MICKLEWHITE'S BACK CATALOGUE? HERE'S OUR SUGGESTIONS...

GET CARTER (1971)
A gritty *Max Payne*-style shoot 'em up, as you wade through level after level of northern stereotypes. One level would even take place outside Jack's B&B, with your character standing in the buff, holding his large weapon. Be the first computer game set in Newcastle, that's for sure.

THE IPCRESS FILE (1965)
FUNERAL IN BERLIN (1966)
Imagine a *Deus Ex*-style action adventure. Classic cold war action with plenty of NPC interaction to accompany sporadic moments of violence. Forget about *The Billion Dollar Brain* (1967) though, as that was just insane.

ESCAPE TO VICTORY (1981)
A football sim with a difference. Training matches take place in the prison camp, with the ever-present threat of players being shot if you beat the Germans too badly.

ZULU (1964)
A more obvious RTS there never was. You'd have to remove any overly racist elements and the final level would have to be impossible to complete, obviously.

EDUCATING RITA (1983)
Er, no. You've got me there. Any suggestions?

He must have shot a lot of tigers.

> "Practise your moves in Blighty, then pull off the heist in Turin"

Get ready to rule

EMPEROR: RISE OF THE MIDDLE KINGDOM

Fancy a Chinese? *Steve Hill* heads East

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Latest instalment of BreakAway's award-winning series
- Features a new time period and setting
- Incorporates multiplayer for the first time
- More detailed graphics engine

"Believe it or not, *Emperor* will also feature Feng Shui – quite possibly a first in gaming"

BREAKAWAY'S long-standing City Building Series now stands at three *Caesars*, a *Pharaoh* and a *Zeus*. Next up is *Emperor*, and it has a distinctly oriental flavour, taking place in China between 300BC and 1000AD, just before the invasion of Ghengis Khan.

So why the continental shift? According to producer Jon Payne: "We'd had a lot of fans asking for it. Also it seemed like a good move to change the setting out of the Mediterranean, somewhere a little more exotic, new and interesting for a lot of gamers. It's a period that people are less familiar with so therefore there's a little bit more education to do. Everyone's familiar with ancient Egypt, the pyramids and whatnot, whereas with China, aside from the Great Wall, people aren't as familiar with a lot of things that the Chinese did, despite the fact that their civilisation probably had more innovations and inventions than almost any other civilisation that started at the same time period."

I CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S NOT BUDDHA

Ancient China certainly offers a lot visually, and Impressions is taking advantage of this. As Jon says: "It's great because it's a new direction, a lot richer, more vibrant. We're trying to get away from the whole columns look that we had, especially with *Caesar III* and *Zeus*."

It still looks like it's using the same engine though. Come on man, this is the 21st century. "It's new… er… We modified the graphics engine so we get about 30 per cent more pixel real estate per grid now." What? "It just allows a higher level of detail."

Right. It also allows the debut of multiplayer components, with up to eight players duking it out, or even collaborating on such projects as The Great Wall. Jon isn't promising an orgy of violence though, claiming "there will be some element of combat in it, but it's more about the world level, with trade and diplomacy. Trying to get alliances, do a little backstabbing and spying."

Believe it or not; *Emperor* will also feature Feng Shui, quite possibly a first in gaming. Fortunately this doesn't extend to arranging scatter cushions in an eye-catching manner – it means you'll have to give your city design some thought. The harmonious arrangement of objects in relation to their environment must be taken into consideration, and efficiently designed cities with beautiful structures will give you a higher Feng Shui level.

And if that's not barmy (or meaningful) enough for you, players will also get to choose an animal to represent themselves while they play, and will subsequently receive benefits based on that creature's role in the Chinese Zodiac. Bagsy the monkey. **PCZ**

A new engine... er, modified to provide a much higher level of detail than previous Impressions' titles. Whatever, it looks good.

NO STYLE, NO POINTS.

Style is everything in Project Gotham Racing. Rip through traffic, pull 360's and power slide out of corners and just watch those kudos points soar. Of course, you'll also be behind the wheel of some of the most outrageously gorgeous motors around. But drive them like a Dodgem and you'll experience butt clenching crash damage. No wonder CVG magazine reckon 'its more fun than Gran Turismo 3'. Ouch.

PLAY MORE. PLAY PROJECT GOTHAM RACING.™

Your sanity level is restored slowly when you're in safe, calm surroundings, but catch sight of some of the horrors and you could lose your head.

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Headfirst Productions
PUBLISHER Fishtank
WEBSITE www.headfirst.co.uk
OUT July

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Innovative sanity system
- Hugely immersive gameplay
- Graphically stunning
- Could be the most disturbing game ever

CV

HEADFIRST PRODUCTIONS

While Headfirst are yet to release a game under their own name, a little digging reveals a long and glorious history under several different guises.

1983 Core members of Headfirst meet at respected developer Adventure International, where they produce the *Scott Adams Adventures* (1-12) and several *Questprobe* games.

1988 After Adventure International goes bust, the Headfirst team move on to found Horrorsoft, where they create *Personal Nightmare* and several *Elvira* games.

1992 Horrorsoft closes down and Adventure Soft is born (*Simon The Sorcerer* series, *The Feeble Files*).

2001 Adventure Soft dissolves into Headfirst, where apart from *CoC*, production is afoot on another paper RPG licence, *Deadlands*, as well as the currently on-hold *Battle Of The Planets*.

Kiss your sanity goodbye...

CALL OF CTHULHU

Anthony Holden looks upon things that Man was not meant to see

IN AN OLD barn in a windswept field on the outskirts of darkest Sutton Coldfield, something sinister is lurking. It is a thing of unspeakable terror, the result of man's perverted need to turn technology to his own foul purpose. As yet inchoate but with the potential to leave every mind it touches hideously scarred and twisted, it calls itself... *Call Of Cthulhu: Dark Corners Of The Earth*.

Scared yet? Well, if not, we're pretty confident you will be when this first-person mind-wrench gets hold of you come summer. In fact, those of a delicate humour may want to give it a wide berth, as it could just be the most disturbing and frightening game ever made. "It's not about shocks and thrills (although there are a few of these) but about a gradually building atmosphere of despair and hopelessness. People should play this game and not be able to sleep afterwards thinking about all they've seen and heard."

So says Simon Woodroffe, head of design and co-founder of Headfirst Productions, and anyone who knows anything about its choice of source material will know that the potential is all there. For the uninitiated, *Call Of Cthulhu* is a pen-and-paper RPG based loosely on the work of early 20th-century writer HP Lovecraft. And while this may inspire more than a few shrugs of disinterest, we know you love it deep down. We know

because just about every game marked by macabre horror – from *Doom* to *Undying* to *Alone In The Dark* – has been influenced at some level by the so-called Cthulhu Mythos, a vague and disputed term covering the world of cosmic fear created by Lovecraft and his followers. As Simon explains: "The storyline is really depressing. It's been designed to read like a real Lovecraft tale about mankind's struggle against creatures far more ancient and alien than he can truly comprehend."

TWITCH GAMING

A game designed to leave you quivering somewhere between deep depression and wide-eyed, terrified insomnia? Possibly not for those who found *Lord Of The Rings* a bit on the scary side then. But however disturbing it turns out to be, *CoC: DCotE* is also one of the most innovative games in development, with a raft of brave gameplay features designed to heighten the tension and level of player engagement. It's still built around familiar action/adventure/RPG devices such as shooting, puzzle solving, exploration and interacting with NPCs, but with enough twists to demand a new generic pigeonhole.

For starters, the game goes against the trend of the genre by opting for a first-person viewpoint, but without feeling obliged to stray too far into FPS territory

(a mistake made by *Undying*). Certainly not a revolution, but a wise move nonetheless, as, let's face it, third-person games such as *Resident Evil* and *Alone In The Dark* have never even come close to the brown-pantsing potential of games such as *AvP2*.

However, the chaps at Headfirst decided early in development that going first-person was a half-measure, and that to achieve true immersion any standard conception of interface had to go too (see boxout). "It's so important to get the player deeply engrossed in the game environment without a HUD to distract them," insists Simon. "We thought the idea of an interface-free game would be quite cool, but it introduced problems into the gameplay. Don't expect a normal interface though."

THINKING MAN'S HORROR

This move towards realistic gameplay mechanics extends to other aspects of the game as well, and ends up determining the nature of many of the game's puzzles. For example, instead of a visible health rating or damage meter, you'll actually have to check your own pulse to determine your state of health, and when injured, examine your virtual body for damage. There are 11 different injuries that you can sustain, each with corresponding effects on performance and each requiring a specific treatment.

As with most of the original RPG scenarios, the game is set in a dark vision of the 1920s.

> ## "People should play this game and not be able to sleep afterwards thinking about all they've seen and heard"
>
> **SIMON WOODROFFE**
> HEAD OF DESIGN, HEADFIRST

"If you take a bullet in the arm which stays embedded you can yank it out with forceps, but this will cause severe bleeding unless you've used a tourniquet first. Once the object is removed you can stitch the arm and remove the tourniquet. Forgetting to do that will cause other problems." So much for picking up floating medkits and going about your business then.

The other most intriguing element of the game is a dynamic sanity system cribbed from the original paper RPG. It's basically a sliding scale governing your slow descent into stark raving lunacy, with your sanity dropping with every upsetting incident in the game. "The player has a sanity score held inside the engine that they have no concept of other than through the effects which come into play when it starts to fall," explains Simon. "It will fall when you first see a Deep One close up and realise the horrors of what you are facing. Or when you find the mangled corpse of a friend in a cesspit…"

Clearly there's loads of potential for messing with player's mind with this sanity business. You won't always know straight away when your character has gone nuts, and the initial signs will be subtle. Flashes of movement at the edge of your vision, voices whispering imperceptibly in your ears. Friends appearing as enemies, or worse still, vice versa… "We're going all-out to mess people up here," admits Simon. "I think our ultimate goal would be news stories about people playing the game and losing the plot."

GORGEOUS, GRIM AND GORY

Forget insomnia then, we're talking actual psychosis now. At this stage a city overrun by zombies is starting to look positively cheerful. Luckily, any depressive aspects of the game are likely to be countered by a degree of sheer aesthetic pleasure, as the game is looking rather stunning in a grim sort of way. The atmosphere and lighting is superb, Simon boasting that Headfirst has been accused of faking their screenshots on a number of occasions.

The multiplayer side of things hasn't been neglected either, with a team-versus-team mode to be built somehow around the sanity management concept.

In fact, there's every chance that this will be the best horror game ever. Either that or we've cracked already. **PCZ**

BEYOND THE HUD

The problem with not having a standard interface is that you have to convey information to the player in other ways, and Headfirst has met this challenge with a number of elegant expedients. One of the most discussed examples is that you actually have to crack open your gun to determine how much ammo you have left. Not only is this more engaging and true to life, it's clearly very damn cool. "There are lots of mechanisms for informing you of your character's status," says Simon. "If damaged, your breathing becomes heavier and you start to slow down – leaving trails of blood as you walk. Your arms start to shake and you develop speech problems and blurred vision. We may even have you wet yourself."

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

■ The spiritual successor to *Privateer*, from the creator of *Wing Commander*
■ Should appeal to *Elite* fans, while remaining accessible to newcomers
■ Rich and interactive story, a huge universe to explore as well as dynamic characters
■ Full multiplayer universe

Light years ahead...
FREELANCER

CV

DIGITAL ANVIL

Founded by Chris Roberts (and chums) after his days at Origin, Texas-based Digital Anvil are now wholly owned by Microsoft Games Studio and have only ever released one game. So what happened to the other three?

1996 Chris Roberts leaves Origin for Digital Anvil, followed soon after by brother Erin, and *Crusader: No Remorse* producer Tony Zurovec.

1997 *Starlancer*, *Conquest*, *Loose Cannon* and *Freelancer* are all in production.

1999 *Freelancer* is shown to a select few at E3 and wins awards for the best game of the show. *Wing Commander – The Movie* however fails to win any Oscars.

2000 *Starlancer*, the prequel to *Freelancer* is released. It's a fine game but nobody buys it. Digital Anvil is bought by Microsoft and Chris Roberts moves on. *Conquest* and *Loose Cannon* are dropped by Microsoft and rumours persist that *Freelancer* could also be canned.

2001 Erin Roberts reveals his next project as *Brute Force* for the Xbox. Two old DA games, *Conquest: Frontier Wars* and *Loose Cannon*, are picked up by Ubi Soft. *Conquest* turns out to be pretty good.

2002 Ubi Soft is still working on *Loose Cannon*, but it's *Freelancer* from Microsoft that everyone is looking forward to.

It's been five years in the making, it's the biggest space sim since the original *Elite* and *Richie Shoemaker* thinks it could be alright
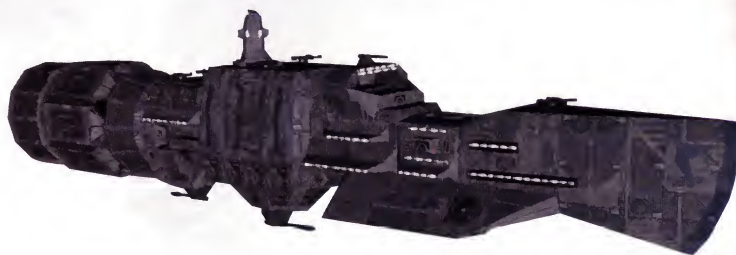

WE'RE NOT in the business of guaranteeing scores, hence the loss of a cover exclusive every now and then. However, there are a few games that you come across, an elite few, where after just a few minutes play you know you are playing a future classic. *Freelancer* is one of them.

First unveiled in May 1999, *Freelancer* was the brainchild of Chris Roberts, creator of all things *Wing Commander*. It was for me the best game on show at that year's E3, the best game I'd seen since *Half-Life* and, more importantly, destined to become the best space sim since the original *Elite*. Watching him play through some very early missions, I was absolutely slack-jawed at what I saw, and thrilled by the plans Roberts had for his all-new

assault on the space-trading genre. I asked him at the end of the demonstration when would the game be out? "At the end of 2001," he said. "At the earliest."

Since then, of course, Chris Roberts' role on *Freelancer* has diminished somewhat. December 2000 saw Digital Anvil, the studio he founded to create the game, fall into the hands of Microsoft, and Roberts' role since has been only an advisory one. To its credit however, Microsoft has stuck by the game, slowly and surely filling in the gaps and despite initial fears to the contrary, has pretty much stuck to the original blueprint, thanks, among many others, to the presence of *Freelancer*'s original lead designer and now Roberts' successor as producer, Phil Wattenbarger. Perversely,
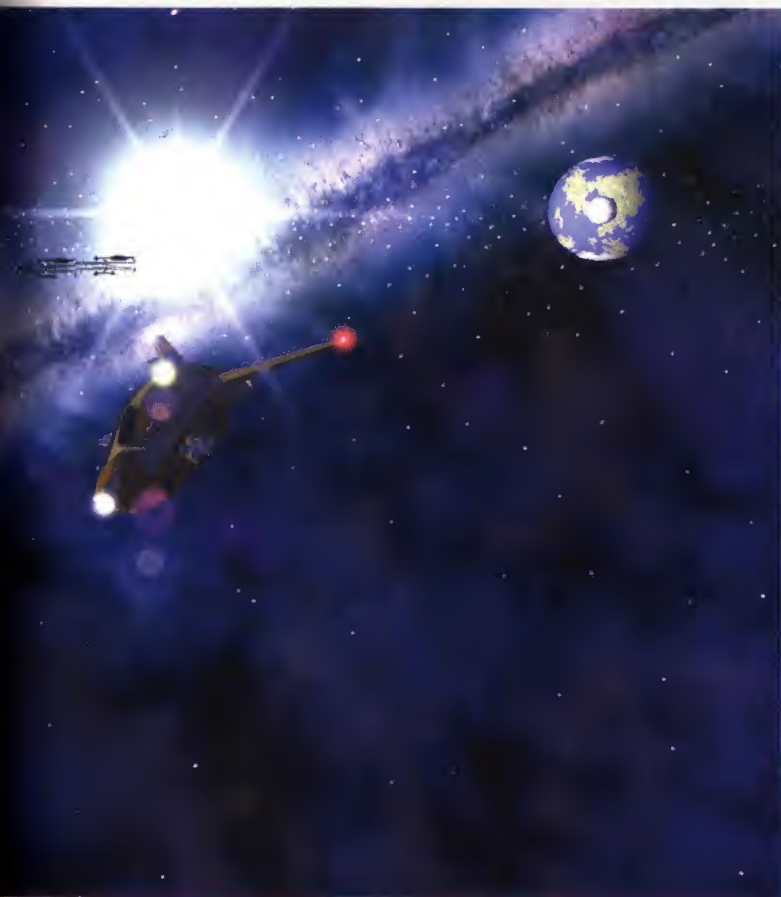
Freelancer's graphical beauty is turning everyone's head.

we can take some solace in the fact that *Freelancer* will only be a year late. Eighteen months ago it looked like the game might never see the light of day.

POSTCARDS FROM THE EDGE OF SPACE

Apart from the upheaval of Microsoft's Borg-like assimilation of the team, there are many reasons for *Freelancer*'s delay; reasons now evident having played the game for a short time and spoken at length to *Freelancer*'s program manager Alan Hartman.

The first thing that hits you is how incredibly diverse it is graphically. No more do we have to endure in our space games a black backdrop, pocked with white pixels and the occasional purple swirl. In *Freelancer*, space is as beautiful as you imagine it to be. Moreover, rather than travel through an endless tunnel of stars towards a distant nebula (knowing full well

you'll never make it), here you can cruise from one end of the universe to the other, passing through dust clouds and nomadic asteroid fields that to those who might stick to the regular trade routes appear as distant landmarks. Each system of stars – their planets, moons and man-made stations are all linked by jumpgates – but rather than have each system as a self-contained 'level', the entire game universe is mapped as one. Hidden in deepest space, perhaps, will be secret bases and ships – the stuff of online legends – much like *Elite*'s mythical Generation Ships that may or may not have ever existed. Some people love that kind of thing.

HOUSE PARTY

But exploration isn't what *Freelancer* is about, not initially anyway. Sequel to the enjoyable if somewhat formulaic *Starlancer* (reviewed issue 91), the game picks up from its predecessor with the

Alliance now divided between four main houses, each based loosely on old Earth civilisations: the morally upstanding Kusari (Japan), the technically advanced Rheinland (Germany), the capitalist House Liberty (USA) and industrial beer-swilling House of Bretonia (Blighty). Starting off in Liberty space with a basic Ford Fiesta of a spaceship and a small stack of credits, where you go from there is – in the true *Elite* tradition – up to you, but the main aim is, in Hartman's words: "To become the ultimate bad-ass freelancer."

EVERYONE ON A MISSION

For those who become disorientated and confused unless they're told what to do, *Freelancer* will also feature a tightly focused story, set around 13 key missions, many of which will be split up into small bite-sized chucks. At any time however you can elect to go off on your own, take on smaller escort missions for cold hard cash, trade valuable commodities between the game's 200 planets, bases and cities or just turn on anyone who comes across your path.

"The story is linear, but the universe is wide-open," says Hartman. "We've been talking for all these years about building this vast universe that is just alive, but only now is it really happening: armadas, traders, the four major and numerous minor factions generating situations – where for example pirates may be attacking a naval outpost, and you can just get involved or fly on by."

The dynamics of the *Freelancer* universe has perhaps been one of the biggest hurdles Digital Anvil has had to contend with. Each ship has a character flying it, and each character has their own aims and allegiances with each of the 48 factions in the game.

"You'll start knowing some of the pilots by their reputation, and in the same way your reputation will precede you," says Hartman. "You can go off in the world and just focus on being, say, a pirate, and the pirate factions may try and recruit you while all the others will hate you. You can be friends with certain factions and make enemies of others, or try and stay neutral to everyone. You can do whatever you want. You and everyone else in the game are basically on a mission."

SOUND AND VISION

It's difficult to gauge just how convincing the AI is at this stage, but while we'll have to wait to test out the gameplay, the graphics have already been turning heads. The visual interface appears sleek, simple and modern, the ship and station designs are suitably varied and the sense of scale light years ahead of any current games. Most importantly, to move the adventure along, rather than boring text messages or grainy video, Digital Anvil

To dock with planetary buses you must fly through docking gates.

has created a stunning character animation system featuring around four hours of actual story footage, plus all the other real-time cinematics that are generated on the fly whenever you land or go to talk to people in bars or stations to ask for information or missions.

Less obvious but just as important are the small innovations Digital Anvil has forged. In a sense it all comes back to variety and focus. As is usual in space combat games, you can jump from system to system via gates, but within each system there is a network of trade lanes; high-speed ringed superhighways where ships can quickly jump between stations and planets. And like *Elite*'s infamous witchspace, the trade routes can be a costly way of getting about.

"The idea behind the trade lanes is to give the game points of focus," says Hartman. "If I'm a pirate I can hide out in a debris field near a trade route, shoot one of the jump nodes on the trade lane, which will disable it for a short period of time and then when ships come along they will have to drop out. I can then take out the transports and hide back into the debris field."

PRIVATEER PLUS

As you progress, building up fortunes and knocking down reputations, you will of course begin to upgrade your ship: adding weapons, restocking missiles, patching on-board tactical software – whatever you need to increase the functionality of your craft. As for the

"We've talked for years about building a universe that's alive, but only now is it happening"

ALAN HARTMAN
PROGRAM MANAGER

THE PAST IS CATCHING UP

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SPACE TRADING

1984-1992
The space trading genre began with *Elite*. While other space games were concerned solely with killing aliens across a 2D universe, *Elite* brought its universe to life in 3D, borrowing – perhaps unwittingly – the concepts of role-playing, where the aim wasn't just to rise through the ranks, but to develop a character, namely your ship. So ground-breaking was the Braben/Bell classic that it remained the benchmark for a decade.

Elite finally arrived on PC in 1987.

1993-1998
If *Elite* put the 'trading' into space trading, *Frontier: Elite II* put in the 'space'. It was a massive and ambitious game, incorporating a detailed

Privateer from 1993.

physics model, full-scale planets and a truly immense universe to get lost in. *Frontier: First Encounters*, despite initial bugs, carried on the same principals.

While Braben was taking *Elite* further down the simulation path, *Wing Commander*'s creator Chris Roberts was keeping things more action-orientated in *Privateer*, adding a rich and colourful story, culminating in the FMV-rich *Privateer 2* from 1996. Despite being set solely on one of Saturn's moon, Gremlin's *Hardwar* was probably the game that most closely resembled the original *Elite*.

1999-2001
In the last few years space trading games have found a

natural home online. Despite their marginal popularity, both *Terminus* and *Jumpgate* successfully managed to transfer *Elite*'s established gameplay to a massively multiplayer universe, the latter being the best example of online space combat available. *X – Beyond The Frontier* however bucked the new trend. Single-player only, this game remains the closest in spirit to the 1984 classic, while *Edge Of Chaos:*

X – Beyond The Frontier, the German Elite.

Independence War 2 brilliantly managed to marry every aspect of the space combat genre up to that point; role-playing, story,

simulation and action – into one cohesive whole.

2002-2003
While online and off *Freelancer* remains the game

Freelancer, out November.

to keep the closest eye on, this year should see the eventual announcement of *Elite IV*, which will see the series head back to its roots, both in terms of gameplay and story. Online we have high hopes for Westwood's first foray into space trading, the promising *Earth & Beyond*. For a whole new perspective on space combat *Eve: The Second Genesis* has also been turning a few heads with its third-person, almost *C&C*-style control method.

Nebulae, ice fields, asteroids and mine fields. Space is not a vacuum.

equipment and the ships themselves, not much has been revealed. Each of the four major houses will have its own trio of pilotable ships, each offering varying characteristics over their rivals. There will be around 15 playable craft in the game, none larger than a freighter. However, though we won't be able to fly any of the large cruisers and battleships, there will be around 40 ships in total, a couple of which there may only be one or two of in the entire game. Again for *Elite* fans, remember to have your screenshot key ready when you chance across *Freelancer*'s version of the Constrictor.

As for the flight model, Digital Anvil is keeping to the tried and trusted arcade dynamic rather than going down the Newtonian route. As such the game will be simple to get to grips with, as was *Wing Commander, FreeSpace* and the *X-Wing* series. What is radical however is the control system. In a bid to bring space combat to the unwashed masses, Digital Anvil has maintained throughout *Freelancer*'s development that the game has been designed for mouse control only. It is unclear whether you'll be able to plug a joystick in, but even if you can, the game will be optimised for mouse users. It's a slightly disconcerting development, but it does work and after some acclimatisation is a joy to use.

OPEN UNIVERSITY
With its rich, detailed universe, open-ended gameplay, expansive multiplayer game and innovative control method, it's hard not to go a little overboard on a game that promises to provide the biggest shake-up in the space combat genre for a number of years. Five years is a long time to be making a game, and there have been a few shaky bumps along the way, but (if you'll allow me to put a personal spin on things), there is no one game that I am looking forward to quite as much as *Freelancer* – aside from of course the long-awaited announcement of *Elite IV*. If I am as impressed after 40 hours of playing the game as I have been watching it for 40 minutes, then *Freelancer* is well on course for a Classic score, which is about as close to a guarantee as you're going to get. 🖭

Q&A

ALAN HARTMAN

Microsoft's group program manager, Alan Hartman, comes clean on *Freelancer Online*

PCZ Originally we were told *Freelancer* would be a single-player game only, with an online game to follow soon afterwards. What's the plan now?
AH There was a lot of talk about that, but we decided to put a multiplayer option back into the game, which is part of the reason why it has taken us so long to get where we are.

PCZ So what can we expect? Deathmatch? Capture The Flag?
AH Actually what we are doing is a client/server model for multiplayer, so you can set up your own server, maybe just allow your friends onto it, and play through the whole universe.

PCZ Pardon! The whole universe?
AH Well the game probably won't look any different. For example, you won't be able to tell which ships are player or computer-controlled unless you select them and scan them. And you won't be able to play through the story, but all the systems, ships and everything else will be in there.

PCZ That could take a while to play through. Can you save the game and will there be any sort of persistence?
AH People will only be able to save in the multiplayer game on the server.

PCZ So will there be a *Freelancer Online* at some point in the future?
AH If you mean a massively mulitplayer, pay-to-play game, then perhaps. It would be a long way off in the future of course, but I think we've come pretty close to that already with our client/server model. We shall just have to wait and see.

MAY 2002

There will be 12 campaigns blending military-based action with economic goals.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Very non-linear slant to gameplay
- Sequel to *Anno 1602*, which sold over two million copies worldwide
- Nine unusual cultures including Venetian, Eskimo and Native American
- Four different climate zones
- Huge scope for trading

CV

SUNFLOWERS

Frankfurt-based Sunflowers are hoping the sun is about to shine on them

2002 *Anno 1503* – Sequel to *Anno 1602*. Will it make an impact in the UK?

2000 *Technomage* – Mixture of action, adventure and RPG

1998 *Anno 1602* – Massive selling strategy game that never made much of an impact in the UK

1996 *Holiday Island* – Sunflowers' debut title in the international market

1993 *Aufschwung Ost* – Reunification fun and frolics for the whole family!

So cultured...
ANNO 1503

Entering a brave new world is intrepid explorer *Keith 'Columbus' Pullin*

HERE IN BRITAIN the German strategy genre is not a popular import. Overly technical, high on statistics and low on humour, it wouldn't appear to be the kind of engineering to fire the imagination, unlike other more renowned German exports such as BMW, Mercedes or Franz Beckenbaur.

So, as we flew into Frankfurt to take a look at *Anno 1503*, it would be fair to say we weren't expecting *Shogun: Total War* or *Commandos 2*. Indeed, the only thing concerning us was how to get the compulsory mention of Germany: 1, England: 5, into a demonstration of an RTS game. You see, at times this job really isn't as easy as it looks.

GET THIS...
But in the words of football commentators up and down the country: "Never underestimate the Germans." Spending some time playing *Anno 1503* led us to not only re-evaluate any preconceptions we may have had, but to actually enjoy ourselves in the process.

For an RTS game this has a refreshingly non-linear feel. The moment your European settler stumbles weakly onto the beaches of this 'New World', your imagination hits overload at the number of ways you can pursue your dream of building a nation. If it means assembling a mighty army to destroy the nine other cultures occupying this bountiful paradise then fine – absolute domination is just one way of completing the game.

In truth though, *Anno 1503* seems more geared towards the hippyish notion of if you don't hurt them, they won't hurt you. While this peaceful flower-power philosophy is highly commendable, you have to wonder whether it's realistic to think that a powerful, technologically advanced nation would do nothing to obliterate a woefully inferior and unprepared nation next-door.

IGNORANCE IS BLISS
However implausible these ideals are, *Anno 1503* sticks to them regardless. By

living in a world where nobody attacks you (if you don't attack them), you can advance through the game's five technological levels at whatever pace suits you.

If you prefer your Utopia to remain as an ultra-green, super-clean level one civilisation that lives off the basic food types. you'll have no worries in doing so. Nobody will come along and snigger at you or attack you, or steal your chickens; your citizens will remain happy in their ignorance and you won't have to get involved in the slippery art of inter-cultural diplomacy and trading that the aristocratic citizens of higher-level civilisations demand. The social behaviour system of the game ensures that each citizen has a range of essentials they need to keep them happy – and it all depends on the level at which their civilisation currently stands.

WHEELING AND DEALING
When you get into the trading part of the game, hints of *Zeus: Masters Of Olympus*

All ten tribes have a unique graphical appearance and are instantly recognisable – as you can see from this small selection of cultures...

and *Civilization III* become apparent. As with *Zeus* the key to economic and commercial strength is your ability to produce commodities and luxuries. However unlike *Zeus*, the type of goods you can knock out are directly linked to the kind of climate you live in.

If you bask in the warm prairies of the south you'll find the land suitable enough to grow evil weed to make cigars. If you live in the more temperate northern zones you can nurture a plentiful crop of hops and ensure the rest of the world gets hammered on your spectacular local brew. If you are situated near precious metals you can make jewellery. In total, *Anno 1503* will boast around 250 building types and 40 different production chains, which should allow for wheeling and dealing on an unprecedented scale.

Graphical variety is also very effective. All ten cultures possess unique architecture as well as a distinctive look about the way they dress. The Venetians are colourful and sophisticated, Aztecs are serious and ceremonial-looking and the poor Eskimos just look cold. Surprisingly for Germans there's a fair amount of subtle humour too. Innkeepers wobble to their pubs after collecting barrels from the market and Aztec priests can be seen performing bizarre rites on their followers. Okay, it's not *Monty Python*, but hey – at least they're trying.

SUNSHINE ON A RAINY DAY
We departed Sunflowers' office with the feeling we'd merely skimmed the surface of what should be a highly engrossing and thoroughly enjoyable RTS, as was its underrated predesessor. It won't change the world, neither does it wish to, but it should be a lot of fun. And as for mentioning the football? We clean forgot. Those Germans – underestimate them at your peril. PCZ

"The Venetians are colourful and ceremonial-looking, Aztecs are serious, while the Eskimos just look cold"

FUTURE TRADING

ANNO 1503 LETS YOU GROW AND MANUFACTURE ALL KINDS OF COMMODITIES. HERE'S JUST A SELECTION OF THE GOODS YOU WILL BE ABLE TO PRODUCE.

BAKERY
The bakery allows you to turn your wheat into delicious bread. Amazing isn't it?

BREWERY
Hops and grapes can be delivered to the brewery to create a splendid mind-numbing brew. If your citizens can get as drunk as Lords they'll be inspired to advance tech levels.

TOBACCO
Clearly the most important product any civilisation can produce is tobacco. Fags and booze: you can't get more cultured than that.

SALT
Unrefined salt must be taken to the salt refinery before being exported around the New World. It's a very highly sought after product in societies with large numbers of aristocrats. The Venetians absolutely love it.

WEAVER
Sheep produce wool. Wool makes clothes. Clothes make people happy and also keep them warm in the cold. If you can somehow manage to export your wool items to the Eskimos you're definitely onto a winner.

ZONE GONE MAD

■ **REVIEWS EDITOR** Martin Korda

▲ Another month, another issue, another deadline survived. Just. After last month's sleep-deprived redesign issue, we plunged head first straight into this one, and were once again forced into a massive last-minute reorganisation as promised review code failed to materialise.

As I write this, Richie has unexpectedly fallen off his chair and is lying motionless on the floor having finally completed *Jedi Knight II* after yet another Pepsi Max-fuelled all-nighter. Anthony is staring vacantly at the scantily clad teenage girls in *Grandia II* and is mumbling something under his breath about puppies, his knee and grass on wickets. I have absolutely no idea what could be going through his head.

Rhianna has just limped back into the office with a severely sprained ankle, having jumped out of the window (the *PC ZONE* offices have gone up in the world don't you know) while shouting, "For Freedom!" over her shoulder at me, before plummeting 15 metres to the concrete below. I knew it was dangerous letting her get her hands on *Freedom Force*. And while all this has been going on, Steve Hill has been wandering round the office, sporadically shouting s***, f*** and a**** at bewildered passers-by, having spent a week being hooked on and frustrated by *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3* in equal measures.

And as for me, I've been very busy playing Beta code for *Counter-Strike: Condition Zero* in preparation for our world-exclusive review next issue. Oh yeah, that and staring at my photo from last month's Meet The Team, where I've become convinced that I looked like a fat, homosexual gypsy and, in my paranoid stupor, have had it replaced. Not that there's anything wrong with fat, homosexual gypsies you understand, it's just not me.

▼ Yup, it's definitely time to get some sleep. See you next century.

Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast – the best *Star Wars* game in the world?

Only games that score 90 per cent or more receive the coveted Classic award. The best of the best.

The second tier award for games scoring between 80 and 89 per cent. Essential purchases.

THE ZONE SCORING SYSTEM

Some people (mainly game publishers) say that our scoring system is harsh. It's not. It's honest and built around the seemingly outdated idea that 50 per cent is an average score. Likewise, 70 per cent is a good score, anything above 80 per cent is excellent, and 90 per cent and above is a Classic. Talking of Classic awards, don't expect to see one every issue as we don't chuck them around like confetti.

OUR REVIEWERS

We think our reviewers are the best in the business. Each one is a specialist in numerous genres and will have played every major release so no game is judged in isolation. We also make sure the right game gets reviewed by the right person, which means that you won't see Steve Hill reviewing an RPG and we won't let Rhianna loose on *FIFA 2003*. We know that occasionally you might disagree with us but we're big enough to take criticism. You can email your thoughts to letters@pczone.co.uk, or get them off your chest instantly on the forums at www.pczone.co.uk. If you think you can do better then why not send us a review – if it's good enough we'll print it in the magazine.

ONLINE REVIEWS AND REVIEW UPDATES

We review a lot of games before they go on sale, and if there are no public servers running before we go to print we won't second guess how the game's going to play online. Instead you'll find dedicated online reviews of all the major releases in our regular Update section. This is also the place where we take a fresh look at games we think have changed significantly – as is the case with persistent online games or through major patch releases.
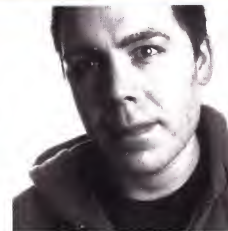
MEET THE TEAM

DAVE WOODS

RICHIE SHOEMAKER

What are you playing?

Hidden & Dangerous: Deluxe

Jedi Knight II and *Warrior Kings*

What's your favourite *Star Wars* film?

Wrath Of Khan

Empire Strikes Back

DEFINITIVE REVIEWS

BUCKET O' HOT SAUCE!

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MARTIN KORDA
*Counter-Strike: Condition
Zero Beta*

I like my sci-fi grittier

ANTHONY HOLDEN
Grandia II and Jedi Knight II

Caravan Of Courage

RHIANNA PRATCHETT
Freedom Force

Return Of The Jedi

STEVE O'HAGAN
Warrior Kings

Star Wars

STEVE HILL
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3

Star Wars

CHRIS ANDERSON
EverQuest

Star Wars

JEDI KNIGHT II: JEDI OUTCAST

■ £34.99 | Pub: Activision / LucasArts | Dev: Raven | ETA: Out Now | www.lucasarts.com

REQUIRES PII 450, 64Mb RAM, 16Mb Direct 3D-compatible graphics card **DESIRES** A PIII 600, 128Mb RAM and a 32Mb 3D card will do the game justice

'When I left you I was but the learner,' says *Richie Shoewalker* as he finally unwraps his copy of *Jedi Knight II*. 'Now I am the master'

A LONG TIME AGO, in an office far, far away... actually it wasn't that long ago – five years to be exact, neither are the old *ZONE* caverns particularly distant from the lofty perch we now occupy in the centre of London, but that's how long it's been and how far we've come since the first *Jedi Knight* cast its forceful grip on us all. A lot has changed: Back then *Duke Nukem Forever* was just around the corner, *Quake* was the deathmatch game of choice and bad *Star Wars* games were as common as Sarlaac dung. We had a wookie for an editor, Mr Cursor was mounted on the wall freshly packed in carbonite and yours truly arrived a fresh-faced young padawan eager to learn the ways of the Force. Now stuck-up, half-witted and scruffy-looking, I find for my entertainment no match for a good blaster, which is as good a point as any to make the jump to light speed, start proper on this review and stop with half-baked *Star Wars* puns.

Thankfully not everything has changed so drastically, certainly not in the *Jedi Knight* universe: Kyle Katarn, the roguish hero of *Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II*, still has a beard and now looks like a geography teacher, his Force-wielding days far behind him. His pilot Jan has stuck by him through thick and thin and, most importantly of all, even though Lord Vader and the Galactic Empire were defeated at the hands of a bunch of twittering furballs, there are still plenty of stormtroopers around that haven't heard the news that their side lost, which means you and your loyal sidekick still have a job to do, even if these days it usually involves hunting down pockets of fractured resistance and checking out abandoned Imperial outposts.

YOUR POWERS ARE WEAK, OLD MAN

It is on one such assignment that the game begins, throwing you into action as soon as you turn the first corner. It's certainly different to the approach we are used to these days, where typically we are treated to a good ten minutes of tension building. But, despite the relentless attacks, it soon becomes apparent that *JKII* – initially at least – offers precious little in the way of innovation, apart from the obvious graphical makeover. The level of intelligence demonstrated by the stormtroopers and the various other *Star Wars* creatures you meet soon after is distinctly average; they either stand still or run towards you, and because the weapons for the most part are slow firing, it only takes a few minutes to realise that all you need to do to avoid losing valuable health is to employ the old circle-strafe tactic and duck behind a wall if the numbers are too great. Chancing across a couple of scout walkers does little to improve things – just jump
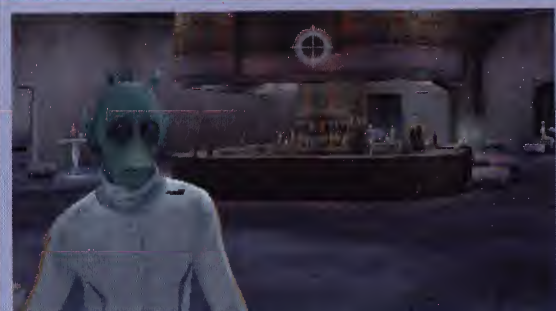
It should take about 20 hours to complete, which makes a pleasant change from the recent glut of short-lived games.

MISSED OPPORTUNITY

DO OR DO NOT. THERE IS NO TRY

It's a criticism that was levelled at the original game and it's something of a disappointment here as the sequel suffers from the same problem; namely a lack of meaningful interaction with the scenery. You can Force pull a bacta tank (health pack) from a distant ledge for instance, even push a bantha-sized box about, but can you launch an empty glass bottle into an Ewok's face? No you cannot. It's a bit inconsistent to say the least, but as Master Yoda would probably say, size matters not.

on a laser cannon platform and blow them away.

Thankfully the graphics, sound and animation throughout the game itself are fantastic, perhaps not as impressive as *Wolfenstein* or *Medal Of Honor*,

but damn fine all the same. The Imperial stormtroopers in particular look the part, convincing to the point that their armour even looks like it's made out of plastic, just like in the films. Particularly noteworthy however

> "Following the simple principal that you must reward people for their efforts, *Jedi Knight II* pays out so very, very handsomely"

There is a mix of in-game cut-scene and CGI video sequences, the former are sometimes ropey and the latter quite grainy, but both propel the storyline along and keep you up to date.

Jedi Knight II's levels are almost as frightening as the original game. So if you don't like heights, look away now.

are the animations, which are many and varied and on a par with *Max Payne* in many respects. Empty your load into a room full of stormtroopers and they'll fling themselves about the place as if an entire army of invisible Bruce Lees have snuck in among them and started throwing punches.

...YOU ARE NOT A JEDI YET

And then you realise the show has yet to really begin. From being only mildly entertained you are suddenly gripped. That Imperial Admiral with the crack-brained scheme you've been chasing for the last four hours isn't the main culprit, there are larger forces at work. The story isn't so bad after all, the stormtroopers aren't dumb simply because some games designer couldn't be bothered to make them more intelligent – stormtroopers are *naturally* stupid. Suddenly everything changes: You find your lack of faith disturbing. You search your feelings and where there was emptiness you gradually see your destiny unfold. Having given up the life of a Jedi Knight, you realise you must re-learn the ways of the Force and the second your lightsaber arrives in your hand is the exact point that *Jedi Knight II* is transformed from a mediocre first-person shooter to an immensely pleasurable action adventure.

THE FORCE IS WITH YOU

The reason for the transformation is a simple one: without any Force powers or your lightsaber to hand, *JKII* follows pretty much the same tired

template as any other first-person shooter, only it simply isn't as good as any of the recent titles, despite the stirring soundtrack and the intoxicating sound of blaster fire rattling in your ears. Had the game continued in the same vein as it started it would have been mightily disappointing, yet once you get the lightsaber and string a couple of moves and Force powers together, the game is no longer a simple shooter, for by selecting the Jedi weapon of choice the game automatically switches to a third-person perspective. Nothing new there, the original had a manual option to do the same, but here it feels infinitely more polished and natural. Much more importantly it allows you to pull off a wide

array of special gymnastic moves that when used in various combinations with the fire and movement buttons, add a beat 'em up aesthetic to the game, one that is far more prominent, fluid and less random than that of the original game.

Needless to say that while the game can be played without having to resort to hokey religions and ancient weapons, it isn't nearly as much fun sticking to the standard arsenal. In fact, I would go so far as to say that having become used to the Force powers, lightsaber combat and special acrobatic moves, I made a point of not using any of the other weapons at all, mainly because apart from the trusty bryar blaster pistol, the Wookie bowcaster and the stormtrooper rifle, all the other weapons you later pick up – from the Repeater Rifle to the ridiculous blunderbuss-like EMP gun – all seem to dispel the illusion that you are playing a *Star Wars* game, I mean, I don't recall anyone running around the Death Star with a rocket launcher, do you?

SCUM AND VILLAINY

The AI does of course improve later in the game, with stormtroopers moving to outflank you on occasion and running away once you've lopped the arms off the guy in charge. You

EVERYONE TO YOUR STATIONS

PREPARE YOUR TROOPS FOR A SURFACE ATTACK

As well as traditional free-for-all Deathmatches, Team Deathmatch and Capture The Flag levels, *JKII* also includes a couple of innovative variations: Jedi Master is essentially King Of The Hill, where the scoreboard leader becomes the Master, while the Force-less runts around him have to bring him down and take the crown, and Duel is effectively *JKII*'s version of the popular *QIII* mod Rocket Arena.

As the game servers were yet to go live as we went to press, we tried out each of the multiplayer maps, both with bots and among the team, and the general consensus is that multiplayer is a blast. Without Force powers enabled however, the game is little more than a typical *Quake* mod, but as with the single-player game, with everyone waving their sabers and leaping about, the game really comes into its own. The bots are quite tough as well and where the weapons in the single-player game felt over the top, they balance the multiplayer game very well.

Rest assured, we'll be taking an in-depth look at the online side of things next issue in Reviews Update, by which time we'll have witnessed the firepower of this fully armed and operational battle simulation.
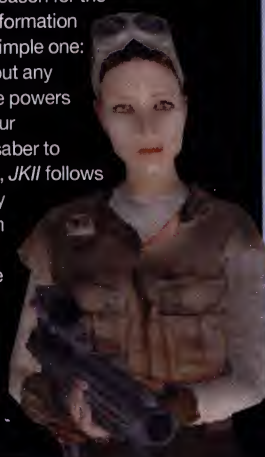
Many levels looks boxy, which is perhaps down to the *Star Wars* décor rather than lazy design.

also occasionally meet up with friendly guards and even team up with Lando Calrissian and Luke Skywalker for brief moments of intense action. There is one mission in particular that sticks in the mind, a small portion of which sees you escorting a droid across an open ramp raked by laser fire and pitted with trip mines. If the droid survives it will open the doors for you, meaning you either have to use your Force powers to pull it back from the mines, or rush forward and destroy the explosives while Rodian snipers take lethal potshots from afar.

The way stealth has been handled is rather underwhelming, not that it is impossible to play the game in such a way, just that it never becomes necessary to do so unless you play the game on the hardest difficulty setting. When you acquire the Force power to heal yourself, you can just hunker down after a firefight and press the required key and wait for your health to max out and continue on your way.

WE HAD A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS
As you can probably tell by now, we actually rather like *Jedi Knight*

II, the first *Star Wars* game to be awarded a Classic since the original *Jedi Knight* in 1997 in fact. To our eternal shame we did have doubts, especially since from start to finish *JKII* has only been in development for about 18 months. In places it shows, the levels are sometimes too big and the way out from them too well hidden. At times you'll be literally bashing your head against the wall trying to jump across a chasm, only to chance across a hidden grate in another room. But even though the game is incredibly frustrating, it is also very rewarding: the dissatisfaction of the first few levels is definitely made up for when you get your lightsaber; as the puzzles get harder; as you meet more characters and then as the story opens up. Plus, to make up for the predictable and sometimes static AI, the game throws the enemy at you in even greater numbers and gives you more ingenious ways to kill them off. Following the simple principal that you must reward people for their efforts, *Jedi Knight II* pays out so very, very handsomely.

Far more so than its predecessor, the sequel manages to capture the essence

of what makes *Star Wars* such an exciting and mindless matinee adventure. Not only has Raven done the original game justice, they have by some unseen force bettered it. It is simply a fantastic game that is great entertainment.

We now only pray our new hope for *Star Wars* gaming is not misplaced, and that the wait for another Jedi Knight adventure won't be quite as long or as far, far away. **PCZ**

INPERSPECTIVE

JEDI KNIGHT / MYSTERIES OF THE SITH
Reviewed Issue 106 , 81%
Despite being as ugly as a Tusken raider and only slightly more intelligent, the original is still worth playing if only to set the scene for the sequel.

MAX PAYNE
Reviewed Issue 107, 90%
Where *Jedi Knight* plays better in third-person, *Max Payne* only plays in third-person. A polished and stylish thriller, but all too easy and over before you know it.

MEDAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSAULT
Reviewed Issue 112 , 94%
The best first-person shooter available, no question. If you've missed it, even if you are a *Star Wars* fan, buy this first.

PCZONE VERDICT

✔ The Force is strong in this one
✔ Once it gets going, it's brilliant
✔ Lot's of rock-hard puzzles
✔ Much more than a simple FPS
✘ Disappointing early on
✘ Lack of interactivity

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Yes, my master

At least Kyle doesn't mince about like Michael Flatley any more.

MENTAL CONSTRAINT - 92 HP - 220 LBS

CHRONAL DEVICE, MERGING MAN-BOT'S POWER WITH THE MASTER OF TIME

ONE-SHOT PUNCH (F1)

FREEDOM FORCE

■ £29.99 | Pub: Electronic Arts | Dev: Irrational Games | ETA: May 3
| http://myfreedomforce.com/index_ff1.html

REQUIRES PII 350, 64Mb RAM and a16Mb graphics card **DESIRES** PIII 600, 128Mb RAM and a 32Mb graphics card

Rhianna Pratchett swaps leather for spandex and goes on a crime fighting spree

IT SEEMED LIKE just a normal day in the *PC ZONE* offices. But for one young woman, it was to turn out to be anything but normal. As she sat at her desk daydreaming of burly men with chiselled features, the picture of her dream white-picket-fenced home started to rattle in its pink seashell frame. "What could it be?" she quivered and as she looked around warily she saw the approach of the ferocious and very manly, Mr Korda. "Miss Pratchett," he boomed while slapping a disc down onto her desk and causing her collection of wobbly headed puppies to

shake. "I want this review of *Freedom Force*, and I want it on Monday!"

"Jeepers, what's a girl to do?" she thought as he strode off. That night as she lay asleep slumped over her keyboard, it seemed as though her prayers might be answered when a strange bolt of pink light smashed through the window behind her and struck her body. To her horror her spine started to bend until she became unnaturally hunched over her keyboard and wobbly-headed puppies were crushed underneath a giant steaming cup of black coffee. She looked in

the mirror to find that her skin had become deathly pale, her eyes red and haunted and as her nicotine stained fingers started blurring across the keys she knew she had become 'Games Journalist Girl'.

It could have happened... But what actually happened was that I played *Freedom Force* and then wrote a review about it, but after several days of fighting crime in a spandex suit, that's simply not superhero enough for me. Those of you who read our preview in Issue 113 will have a fair idea of what *Freedom Force* is about, but for those of you who didn't catch it, the game in

question is a 3D team-based RPG involving superheroes.

IN THE BEGINNING...
Strange canisters of 'Energy X' are popping up after being dropped from a passing alien spaceship and have started to cause mutations in unsuspecting members of the public. The first of those to fall is Frank Stiles who becomes the Minuteman, who's not named because of sexual inadequacies, but after the 18th century American militia who could mobilise in less than a minute, history fans. As the Minuteman engages in his own personal crusade, he runs into

Man O' War is the marine equivalent of Sean Connery.

PRESSURE PUNCH (F3)

ARROW (F1)

More Adam West than Tim Burton, but still a top RPG romp.

WALLOP (F1)

Cripes, giant Ants!

If you're going to play with the big boys accidents will happen.

other newly created heroes such as Alche-Miss, The Ant, Man O' War and Bullet who all have their own secret origins.

It feels like the whole Irrational Games team sat in a tree house for a few months with bottles of fizzy pop and some sherbet dabs and read every Dark Horse Comic ever produced. Because what they've produced is a 1950/60s American comic book world, even down to the dramatic pause... in... sentences! Villains are never killed, they're 'brought to justice'. The costumes are lurid, the names: Dwight, Frank, Hank etc, are all-American, and it's all served up with a big slice of mom's apple pie.

How you react to this, will depend on how well you can put up with that kind of world. But for every comic book cliché that makes you cringe there's another that translates so effortlessly into a computer game that you begin to wonder why a game like this hasn't been done before.

DEMOLITION MAN

One aspect of the game that works really well is the interactive environment in which your superheroes can smash-up buildings, uproot streetlights and throw cars, telephone boxes and boulders at your enemies. You'll need to be careful when swinging lamp posts though, because if a team-mate gets in the way it all starts to look like an episode of *The Three Stooges*. And as indestructible as the superheroes

may appear, walking into traffic isn't a good idea, as all vehicles seem to have 'I don't brake for heroes' bumper stickers.

Missions are a fairly linear affair: choose four super heroes and go after the archetypal bad guys, like the giant killer ants, psychotic robots and gangsters who look like they've wondered off the set of Bugsy Malone. Each mission also has secondary objectives such as protecting civilians and thwarting minor crimes, which earn you the prestige points needed to recruit new superheroes.

The 3D engine works smoothly for most missions, but the later ones are quite RAM hungry even with 128Mb, so turn down the character detail if it starts chugging.

"It feels like the whole Irrational Games team sat in a tree house for a few months with bottles of fizzy pop and some sherbet dabs and read every Dark Horse Comic"

With an easy access pause button, most of the more frantic battles are practically turn-based.

You turn your back for one minute and next thing you know there's a raptor biting your foot.

HOLDING OUT FOR A HERO

WHAT WOULD A DOSE OF ENERGY X DO FOR THE ZONE TEAM? HERE'S TWO OF OUR BEST MEN

Secret identity: The Korda Pounder
Created: After being buried under a pile of frozen burgers, accidentally dropped from a passing cargo plane. He's now 100 per cent pure burger.
Strengths: Extremely strong, pounds his enemies into a pulp while chanting "D'ya want fries with that?"
Weakness: Enemies who use vegetables as weapons.

THE KORDA POUNDER

Secret identity: The Pepsi Max Kid
Created: After falling into a vat of concentrated Pepsi Max.
Strengths: Deadly accurate can throwing and the Max hose which shoots out jet-powered Pepsi Max to obliterate his enemies.
Weakness: Low levels of Pepsi Max in his blood stream cause him to wander off in the midst of battle or just before meetings. Accidentally drinking Coca-Cola.

THE PEPSI MAX KID

Even time is your enemy.

ROLE WITH IT

Ken Levine, general manger of Irrational Games, claimed in our preview that the RPG aspects of *Freedom Force* were very deep. However, this doesn't seem to be the case when compared to something like *Baldur's Gate 2* or *Deus Ex*. Perhaps 'accessible' is a better word, since levelling up, attributes and attacks are controlled through a simple experience points equals character points model. Skills and defences have been designed in traditional comic-book style and tend to reflect the character and personality of the hero (for example the Latino hot head has fire skills) rather than being designed for truly balanced gameplay.

Although there are 10 types of damage such as cold, energy and piercing, individual heroes only have pre-designed attacks

in a few of these areas. There also doesn't seem to be much balance when weighing up the heroes' attack damage, with enemy resistances. For example, a few enemies are susceptible to lighting damage, but I only found one hero that could inflict it.

Accessibility is no bad thing, and with no inventory to worry about *Freedom Force* is all about epic 3D superhero fights. Combat is a fairly simple affair. Right click brings up a command menu of available attacks and skills, and also regulates their intensity, and left click executes. Sadly there's no superhero gadgetry or vehicles to play with, no Mintueman moped or even the glimpse of a Liberty Lad skateboard.

Perhaps this is to encourage you to create your own superheroes, as the games ships with its own character editor and there are already hundreds of available skins to download, including classics such as Superman and the Incredible Hulk. Undoubtedly this will probably prove much more fun than using the original characters and we shall bring you a multiplayer review with the *ZONE* team's heroes very soon.

AMERICAN PIE

Freedom Force has a few knowing jokes, but doesn't really feature the dark undertones of the original *Batman* or *The Watchman* comics. Instead it plays it straight all the way, conjuring up an era when kids absent-mindedly listened to their parents raging about the commies over the dinner table, while drawing robot spacemen on their napkins. It may not be a hugely sophisticated RPG, but its execution is fairly slick. Sometimes you have to put aside thoughts of dark and foreboding plots and simply take a look at how much fun you're having. I don't know about you, but rarely do I get to experience the unrestrained childish euphoria I felt when

I found myself smacking a giant robot about the kneecaps with a traffic light. And my life has been all the poorer for it... until... NOW! **PCZ**

PCZONE VERDICT

✔ Creates a great comic book world
✔ Very easy to pick up
✔ Wide variety of missions
✔ Get to create your own superheroes
✘ Missions are very linear
✘ Not nearly dark enough

82

Unadulterated Bubblegum fun

Speed garage.
Speed jazz.
Speed reggae.

Get any type of music pronto, thanks to downloads nearly 10 x faster* with blueyonder. You're always on so there's no dial-up nonsense or tying up your phone line, because you're connected by a separate broadband cable.
Unleash the net, call 0800 953 0736, or visit www.blueyonder.co.uk/info to check local availability.

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HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC IV

■ £29.99 | Pub: 3DO | Dev: New World Computing | ETA: March 28 | www.3do.com

REQUIRES Pentium II 300 and 128Mb RAM
DESIRES 256Mb RAM and a 16Mb 3D CARD if you want to play in hi-res mode

The *Heroes* series finally gets a decent visual upgrade. And not a moment too soon, notes *Chris Anderson*

THE undisputed king of turn-based fantasy games is back (well, if it is disputed it's not often, and nobody listens anyway), and in time-honoured sequel tradition it does all the things that every other sequel to every other game out there does. That's right, they've changed the graphics a bit. Take a peek at the screenshots on these pages and you will notice hi-res, crisp, new, colourful graphics with highly detailed landscapes. Given the addictive nature of the gameplay in the *Heroes* series, if all New World Computing had done for *Heroes IV* was slap pretty new graphics on top of

Heroes III and put it in a box, this would be enough to keep turn-based geeks all over the world perfectly happy.

We at *ZONE* Towers, however, require a little more than a bit of gloss from our high-profile sequels. So you can

You know the sort of thing: take your hero, ramble round the landscape, pick up a few units before plodding into battle, and pick up treasures, gold and items along the way before meandering into battle against various creatures guarding the

make when they gain a level (levels are gained through experience won from successful battles). There are five schools of magic, and you can train your heroes in any of them, from a basic level right up to grand master level, and the huge array

"There are five schools of magic, and you can train your heroes in any of them"

imagine then, how we were less than impressed when the first couple of hours of gameplay appeared to present an almost identical gameplay experience to what was offered with *Heroes III*.

better (ie useful) items and goodies. Did we yawn? Well, yes we did, but as always in these situations we pressed on in the hope that things would get better, and almost without us noticing, they did.

BURY ME DEEP

Heroes Of Might And Magic IV, as the more intelligent among you will have guessed by now, is all about heroes and how you develop them. No change there then, but how you develop them is now entirely up to you. Hero classes can change dramatically depending on the choices you
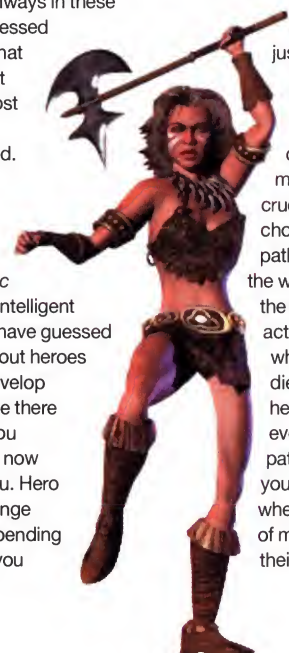
of skills and spells can be mixed and matched so you can develop your heroes to suit just about any situation. Heroes also take an active part in combat now, making it even more crucial that you choose the right paths for them along the way, and this has the net effect that you actually care about whether they live or die. Guide your heroes through an ever more complex path of choices and you will be upset when that huge horde of minotaurs kicks their heads in and

Combat is not wildly exciting but it serves its purpose.

Terrain varies wildly from one campaign to the next.

As addictive and entertaining as ever.

ruins all your hard work. This is a good thing. It makes you think long and hard about the choices you make on the main game map. It makes you think twice before you take on that enemy stronghold with dozens of strong units, and it forces you to develop increasingly more powerful units of your own to protect your heroes on their way to mastery of the more difficult skills and levels of magic in the game. The core of the game then, is just about right. Let's move on then to the most controversial area in a game of this nature, namely: combat.

AFTER YOU THEN

The battle sequences may have had a graphical facelift, and the combat maps are not as claustrophobic as in previous incarnations of the *Heroes* series, but combat, it has to be said, is still as singularly unexciting as it ever was. You can, if you wish, activate auto combat to get things over quickly, but even when you appear to be evenly matched with your opponents you will lose more often than not with this option, so taking control of things yourself is the only way forward. Admittedly, battles become more exciting later in the game when your heroes have advanced skills and spells, and strategy becomes more important in order to win, but after the incredible combat sequences in *Etherlords*, *Heroes Of Might And Magic IV* feels decidedly flat in this department. Does it matter? To be honest, no it does not. There's so much to do in *Heroes IV* outside of combat that the battle scenes suffice as a means to an end and are no great annoyance. The most important thing about *Heroes IV* is everything matters. Every structure you build in your towns, every skill and school of magic you choose for your heroes, every key landmark you conquer on the map, all of these things are important when it comes to determining your overall success, and this is what makes the game so hugely addictive. The only downer was a bug that kept crashing me to desktop every time I left the build structure screen. We assume this will be fixed very quickly with a patch (check the homepage listed here before buying to see if there's an update) but other than that *Heroes IV* is a triumph for New World Computing, and probably the last truly great old-skool turn-based strategy game that we will see on PC for a long time to come. **PCZ**

SIX GAMES IN ONE?

THE POWER OF SIX

There are no less than six campaigns in *Heroes Of Might And Magic IV*, and they all feel hugely different to one another. Each has its own introduction and ongoing narrative, and each has different goals and its own unique graphic set. This give *Heroes IV* massive replay potential, and even if you eventually complete all the campaigns you still have set scenarios you can play through if you are hungry for more. In sheer value for money terms, *Heroes IV* is as good as it gets. Full marks to New World Computing for offering so much in the box when they could have just held out and released a lot of this material in expansions (like just about everyone else does).

Heroes IV has a massive replayability factor.

You have to control at least one town or you'll get nowhere.

PCZONE VERDICT

✔ Vastly improved graphics
✔ Finely tuned heroes-advancement path
✔ Hopelessly addictive
✔ Huge replay value
✘ Uninspiring combat sequences
✘ No massive gameplay innovations

84

Deep, addictive and highly replayable

Tony's a crazy radical dude... look, he's even put his right foot on his left leg.

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3

■ £29.99| Pub: Activision | Dev: Gearbox | ETA: Out Now | www.activision.com

REQUIRES PII 450, 64Mb RAM and a 3D card **DESIRES** PIII 600, 128Mb RAM and a 32Mb 3D card

He's a grown man who should know better. Here's *Steve Hill*

FUNNY THINGS, games. Paradoxically, it seems that the better they are, the angrier they make you. For example, during the extensive testing of *Tony Hawk's 3* in the *PC ZONE* laboratory, Richie was simultaneously swearing his way through *Jedi Knight II* while Dave and Anthony traded rockets and insults during a head-to-head bout of *Quake III*. And me? Long periods of silence punctuated by intermittent bursts of foul and abusive language. We might as well be working on a f***ing building site.

A straight port of last year's console hit, Tony's third game manages that rare trick of being hugely frustrating yet infuriatingly compelling. It's an addictive affair, and one that has you frantically slapping the keyboard to have another two minutes of controlling a pretend man on a child's toy. Whereas a lot of people dabbled with skating at the end of the '70s, grazed their knees and went back to Scalextric, Tony Hawk stuck with it to become a world-renowned king of the plank.

Skate aficionados will claim he was always the main man, but surely even he will have to concede that much of his fame has come through his game endorsement, possibly even more so than Colin McRae. The games have all managed critical and commercial acclaim, and it will come as no surprise to learn that work is already under way on a fourth.

PC POWER
Meanwhile, the PC fraternity are casually tossed a conversion of last year's PS2 hit. And it's great. Naturally, the mechanics aren't hugely different from its predecessor, but what it does is to take the skateboarding action out of empty locations and into living, evolving environments.

Traditionally a fairly solitary pursuit, the levels are now populated, often by more than mere onlookers. People play an integral role in the game, and are involved in the various tasks that must be completed to unlock the next level. For instance, in the Canada stage, a skater has managed to get his tongue frozen to a pole and can only be freed by skating into him. That might sound pathetic on paper, but it makes sense within the game, as does unleashing a snowfall to bury a bully.

More difficult trick-oriented goals must be achieved, such as impressing a group of skaters, who will hurl insults at your pathetic efforts – quite ironic when playing as Tony Hawk, the world's greatest skater.

BUMP AND GRIND
A further goal is finding the now familiar secret videotape, and this is where the real gnashing and wailing comes into play as it almost becomes like a platform

Customise a skater, and make him look a prick.

360 CANNONBALL 250

Score 2,971   1:06

NOSE STALL 285

BUCKET O' HOT SAUCE! 250

...and a family portion of chicken wings.

Score 2,981   0:31

BS 50-50

Yes, that man is taking a piss.

YOU ROCK MY WORLD

BS 50-50

IF THE GAME DOESN'T MAKE YOU ANGRY, THE SOUNDTRACK WILL

The *Tony Hawk's* series has always been renowned for its adroit use of licensed music, and number three doesn't disappoint, offering 20 carefully selected tracks for your skating enjoyment, meaning that you're effectively getting a game and an album. And it features some crackers. Da kidz are ably catered for with the likes of Alien Ant Farm and House Of Pain, but pride of place must go to The Ramones' *Blitzkrieg Bop*, two minutes and 14 seconds of punk-pop perfection, the ideal tempo and length for a bit of virtual skateboarding (although that probably wasn't the late Joey Ramone's intention when he wrote it). If you don't like The Ramones, you're dead inside. A further honourable mention must go to Henry Rollins, the world's angriest man, who appears here in the guise of his Rollins Band, offering a blistering slice of realism and hate. There's even room for Motorhead's timeless classic, *The Ace Of Spades*: "And don't forget the joker..."

game, albeit a platform game on a skateboard, a device clearly not intended for climbing trees and so forth. Tooth-grindingly annoying it might be, but when you eventually get the tape through a combination of hops, jumps, grinds and sheer luck, the relief is palpable.

Wisely, not every goal has to be achieved to get to the next level so if you are particularly weak in one area you can still proceed, with the bonus of being able to go back later and finish off the tasks you left. And the levels are worth revisiting, as they are bewilderingly large, including such treats as Rio, Tokyo and an earthquake-ridden LA.

REVERT TO FORM

All the tricks, flicks, ollies, nollies, manuals and spatchcocks of the previous game remain intact, with one

important addition, that of the revert button. Whereas the manual function still allows you to continue combos, revert now throws in big air tricks, so if you had the co-ordination it would be possible to play out the entire two minute run as one long combination, which will appeal to gamers reared on the button pressing antics of beat 'em ups. Nobody said it was going to be easy, and opening up a level can take a concerted effort, giving the game plenty of legs.

Cack-handed buffoons shouldn't dismiss it though, as it is still a joy to play, even if you're just cruising around nodding intently to the angry music. Even once completed, you'll still come back for more as it's unadulterated fun. And if you're into Barbie dolls, you can even dress up your skaters,

including the new addition, Bam Margera of MTV and Channel 4's moron-mocking extravaganza, *Jackass*.

So it's not bad then. Clearly, if you already own one of the other Tony Hawk's games, you may well be reluctant to shell out for another, but hey, it's your money. **PCZ**

PCZONE VERDICT

✔ Enormous levels
✔ Greater interaction
✔ Superb music
✘ Immensely annoying
✘ No major advances from *Tony 2*

86

Even better than the real thing

Battles are spectacular, without too many annoying unskippable spell sequences.

GRANDIA II

The script, though overworked and a bit preachy, is also quite funny.

■ £29.99 | Pub: Ubi Soft | Dev: Game Arts | ETA: March 29 | www.ubi.com/us/games/grandia2

REQUIRES PII 300, 64Mb RAM, 16Mb 3D card **DESIRES** PIII 500, 128Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card

Anthony Holden settles the great battle between good and evil, again

IN CASE you haven't noticed, the Japanese have a thing for abbreviations. Instead of Pocket Monsters you have Pokémon, instead of plastic models, plamo. Brad Pitt is Brapi and if you have a Lolita complex it's a lolicom (don't ask how I know that last one). All this seems like a great idea to me, plus I'm kinda hoping it explains why they call me 'A-hole' whenever I'm in Japan.

In any case, it makes me wonder why Japanese game developers are so bloody long-winded when it comes to RPGs. Going on an epic adventure across vast continents, talking to hundreds of unique NPCs, saving the world from destruction and ultimately resolving your inner turmoil and learning how to truly love someone is all very well, but when it involves sitting through hours upon days of corny dialogue and mind-numbingly repetitive battles something's got to give. It's especially irksome when the RPG in question has as much technical elegance, graphical polish and genuine humour as old-skool console role-player *Grandia II*.

DAYS OF OUR LIVES

Don't get me wrong though. I love quirky Japanese RPGs, and one of the things that has always fascinated me about them is how their corny, predictable and overblown character almost becomes a draw card once you're engrossed in their enchantingly cute little worlds. Otherwise cold and impassive gamers suddenly become absorbed in the shallow romantic interactions and tensions of party members; game characters take on the nature of dear friends, eyes swell with tears during overly emotional scenes.

The brilliant but largely unrelated predecessor to *Grandia II* was one such game; unfortunately *Grandia II* cannot maintain the same level of fascination. While the story of Ryudo and Elena's quest to find the Divine Sword and prevent the coming of the Day Of Darkness reads well enough, it's ultimately both weak and needlessly linear, with a distinct lack of mini-games and side quests to break the tempo. The miraculous thing is that the game still comes off as a very enjoyable example of the genre, thanks in no small part to a refined and innovative combat system.

CRITICAL HIT

Expertly combining real-time and turn-based elements, *Grandia II*'s battles are simple yet subtly strategic, with a refreshing degree of movement and plenty of pyrotechnic excess. Some shameless repetition of monsters tends to douse the flames somewhat, as does a general lack of difficulty, but fighting still remains one of the game's high points. The power-up curve is also hugely effective, and those susceptible to the allure of level-ups and unlockable special moves will be back in therapy in no time.

Fans of Japanese cuteness will also find plenty to like in *Grandia II*'s nicely chunky characters and superb 3D graphics, though the conversion from Dreamcast is far from perfect. Minor graphical glitches abound, especially in the more eye-popping magic effects; shadows have a tendency to go haywire, and for some reason the once-beautiful CG cut-scenes look like they're being live-streamed from a dodgy porn site.

Overall, it's a tricky one to score. Games of this type on the PC occupy a smaller niche than the most anal flight sim, but at the same time the competition is practically non-existent. In essence then, *Grandia II* is a slightly shoddy port of a very good Dreamcast RPG on a platform ill-suited to its esoteric charms. *Final Fantasy* fans take note. **PCZ**
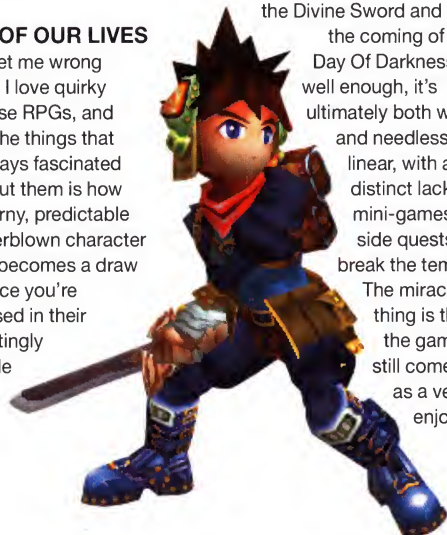
PCZONE VERDICT

✔ Excellent combat system
✔ Epic in scope
✘ Extremely corny in places
✘ Lacks both mini-games and side quests
✘ Sloppily ported from Dreamcast

70

Japanese cuteness on a grand scale

HUMANITY'S LAST HOPE IS YOU.

This is a skeleton I visited way too early (as is clearly indicated by the dead healer in the party panel).

MIGHT AND MAGIC IX

■ £29.99 | Pub: 3DO | Dev: New World Computing | ETA: Out Now | www.3DO.com

REQUIRES Pentium II 400, 64Mb RAM and a 3D card DESIRES 128Mb RAM unless you want to turn off all the graphic options

The *Might And Magic* series has a slightly dubious reputation in RPG circles. *Chris Anderson* gives the latest incarnation a chance to redeem itself

LET'S BE honest about this, the last game in this series was so completely awful you would think New World Computing would just have given up and stuck with what it knows best (games like *Heroes Of Might And Magic IV* for example, reviewed on page 76) but it has come back for another crack of the whip, and sure enough, this time around it has actually managed to do a fairly decent job. The horrible interface and dire graphics that plagued *Might And Magic VIII* have both been ditched and replaced with a smoother more friendly interface and a brand new full 3D engine. The Lithtech graphics engine may be getting on a bit now, but it certainly makes a huge difference to a series that has traditionally sported the worst graphics currently available.

Improvements in general gameplay are evident also, with a more subtle and tactical approach to combat. The game can be played in real-time, but you will die very quickly if you don't press enter to pause the game and play out the action in turn-based fashion. This is the first example of this we've seen that works well in a first-person RPG. The class system works well, too. Choosing initially from just a fighter or magic user, your characters can take different paths as they level up and choose different classes according to how you want your party to develop. Of course, it's not perfect.

OLD HABITS DIE HARD

The character and NPC graphics and animations still look pretty damn awful, some of the conversational text is nonsense, there are too many rooms in the game that serve no purpose, and when your characters gain levels they don't automatically 'level up', you still have to go to a trainer in a town and pay for
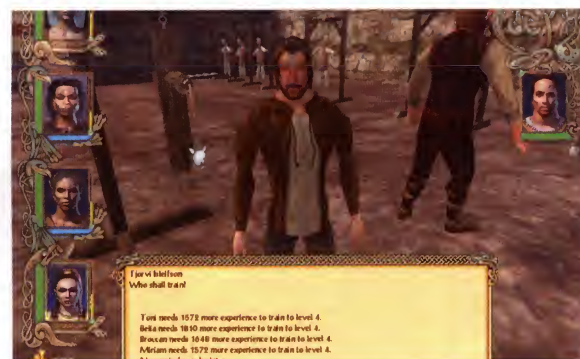
Rather than just go up in level, you have to pay for it in a town, which is clearly stupid.

the levels you have already earned in the battle field, but for all this there's still an enjoyable game to be found here. *Might And Magic IX* is one of those games that draws you back to it time and again without you really knowing why. Maybe it's the clever design of certain levels, or the feeling that you are in a very big and real game world, or the multitude of quests and simple but effective class advancement system. Whatever the reason, for the first time *Might And Magic* has done more things right than it has done wrong, and that can never be a bad thing. **PCZ**

PCZONE VERDICT

✔ Huge gameworld
✔ Flexible and intuitive class and magic system
✔ Clever dungeon design in places
✘ Silly conversational text
✘ Ugly character and NPC graphics
✘ No 'auto levelling'

68

Strangely addictive despite the flaws

No pressure, but the mother of all combat games has arrived. Halo takes you to an alien ring world where you must destroy mankind's sworn enemy: The Covenant. Vanquish the alien hordes with a vast arsenal of weapons and vehicles, whilst laughing in the face of the Geneva Convention. Any wonder Edge magazine gave it 10/10. Just prepare your armoured underwear.

www.xbox.com/uk/halo

PLAY MORE. PLAY HALO.™

KICK OFF 2002

■ £7.99 | Pub: Acclaim | Dev: Steve Screech | ETA: Out Now | www.ko-gathering.com

REQUIRES P233, 64Mb RAM and an 8Mb 3D card **DESIRES** Requires PII 400 with 128Mb RAM and a 16Mb 3D card

Steve Hill takes a step back in time

Extreme close-up. Any nearer and you'd be inside them.

'Kick off? How very nineties."

There's a team editor, but unfortunately it saps the will to live.

1990: the Berlin Wall needed a bit of point-work, people still took ferries to France, and the idea of Manchester United winning the League was laughable. In the gaming world, *Kick Off 2* was the big noise among Amiga owners, providing a frantic representation of the game of football. Twelve years is a long time in gaming though, and in terms of the art form's evolution, the early '90s represent something of a midpoint. So what place does a *Kick Off* game have in the cut and thrust of the 21st century? The short answer is none, and it's about as relevant – and as welcome – as a Nolan Sisters comeback tour.

There's a saying in football: never go back. It applied to Howard Kendall's disastrous return to Everton, and the same argument can loosely be applied to football games. Despite our rose-tinted review of the *Sensible Soccer* remake, it never really recaptured the heady delights of the original, and was made to look ugly and stupid by the Actuas and FIFAs of the day. Even more perverse was the attempt to bring back Jon Ritman's Spectrum classic *Match Day*, although a quick word with the BBC lawyers led to it being called *SuperMatch Soccer*. Either way, it sold like unproverbial cold cakes.

FEVER PITCH
Acclaim doesn't seem to have learned from that experience, as it is they who are responsible for publishing this modern day version of the Anco classic. Time-wise at least, there is a parallel with the recent million-selling *Wolfenstein* remake. However, there's a world of difference between using today's technology to

"This sort of thing really should be left to the emulation scene"

convey bodily mutilation and using it to show an overhead view of a football pitch. In *Kick Off 2002*, the 3D accelerated graphics are as unnecessary as they are indiscernible, adding very little to the experience.

As for the gameplay, the stupidly fast pace has been maintained, and it hasn't dated well. These days, discerning football gamers have grown used to having time on the ball, and a game in which 11 ants run about like blue-arsed flies isn't going to cut the mustard. Such subtleties as releasing a through ball to pick out a well-timed run have no place here, and this is merely football as pinball.

THE SENSIBLE OPTION
Kick Off 2 may have been a contender back when the Premiership was a twinkle in a bank manager's eye, but as this remake proves, progress can often be a good thing. Even *FIFA 2002*'s half-arsed fumblings are infinitely preferable to this relic. At least it looks like football, and actually features real players.

At less than 8 quid you could do worse for your cash, but in all honesty this sort of thing should be left to the emulation scene. Besides, I was always a *Sensi* man myself. **PCZ**

PCZONE VERDICT

✔ Cheap
✔ Reminds you of how much games have improved
✘ Antiquated gameplay
✘ Barely recognisable as football
✘ Fictional player names

40

A kick up the '90s

Royal Birkdale and Pebble Beach are just two of the six courses on offer.

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2002

■ £34.99 | Pub: EA Sports | Dev: EA Sports | ETA: Spring | www.ea.com

REQUIRES PII 600 and 128Mb RAM **DESIRES** PIII 733, 128Mb RAM and 64Mb or more direct3D card

Golf? Played on a PC? Does anyone really care?
Keith Pullin does

Monty finds himself in a spot of bother.

IT'S BEEN a long time coming (three previous attempts spanning four years) but the Tiger can finally let out a muted roar of satisfaction. *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2002* is a game worthy of the great man's name. OK, it's by no means perfect (well obviously, it's a bloody golf game), but the main thing is we've got something that's vaguely reminiscent of the game they call golf – and what's more – it's jolly good fun. What, what, what…

IF LOOKS COULD KILL…
But let's not get too carried away. *PGA 2000* hasn't lost its crown yet. *TW2002* does take great, muddy strides towards that goal with its impressive range of competitions and options. Indeed, with the chance to play in the PGA professional tour against the likes of Woods, Azinger, Montgomerie and co. there's a sizeable challenge present for both hackers and the Pringle brigade.

Graphically *TW2002* is quite superb – well, it's EA Sports, so you expect that. Trees sway in the wind, recognisable pro-player models gesticulate to the galleries and clapping crowds throng every tee and green. The icing on the cake is an audacious array of camera views including ground-cams that follow the golfers down the fairway and a fully controllable shot-cam that allows you to direct your shot easily and efficiently.

No doubt about it, this Tiger is a handsome beast. But when it comes to sheer gameplay *PGA 2000* is still the daddy. And here's why…

A GOOD WHACK
Whereas the putting in *TW2000* and *TW2001* was too difficult, in *TW2002* it's too easy. Admittedly

it makes a pleasant change to be able to whack your ball straight into the hole from anywhere on the green, but realistically you have to say that swinging the

"The fact is you can't control the spin of the ball"

balance from one extreme to the other is not the ideal solution to the problem.

And on the fairway there are more interface problems. The inclusion of Readyplay and a vertical TrueSwing are both welcome additions, but when you consider that *PGA 2000* had both of these options a couple of years ago it's hard to get overly excited.

TW2002's TrueSwing is also a bit crude, so it's actually very difficult to get any kind of draw or fade on the ball. You can affect this to a certain degree by adjusting your shaft flex and club weight, but the fact is you can't control the spin of the ball

anywhere near as well as you'd like. You'll also find you can't switch to imperial measurement. There's no pound of bananas here, it's metric all the way…

So like we said, *TW2002* has its weaknesses, but when it comes down to it, it's still great fun to play. Grab a few rounds with someone over the Net and you'll have a ball. Well, you won't lose your balls anyway. **PCZ**

PCZONE VERDICT

✔ Looks great
✔ Has Readyplay and vertical TrueSwing
✔ Loads of pro players
✘ Putting is too easy
✘ Difficult to draw or fade
✘ Pathetic course architect

79

Almost on a par with the best

DESTROYER COMMAND

■ £29.99 | Pub: Ubi Soft | Dev: Ultimation | ETA: Out Now

REQUIRES PII 266, 64Mb RAM and a 16Mb 3D card **DESIRES** PIII 600, 128Mb RAM and a 32Mb 3D card

Steve O'Hagan learns about rum, sodomy and the lash

DESTROYER command puts you in charge of small groups of World War II destroyers, the cannon fodder of any 1940s navy. You play single missions or a campaign, or even play online against owners of *Silent Hunter 2* in an intriguing submarine versus surface ship match-up. Units can be given orders on the map

screen or you jump into the hot seat on the bridge.

We don't doubt that *Destroyer Command* is unflinchingly realistic. But could it be the life of a destroyer captain doesn't lend itself to enjoyable simulation? Missions that involve spending weeks combing thousands of square miles of mid-Atlantic Ocean for a

lone U-boat don't quite set the imagination racing. And only engaging in combat at night to avoid air attacks doesn't make for much of a spectacle.

Directing your flotillas on the map screen feels too abstract as the interface is clumsy, and watching a few square counters drift through an expanse of blue doesn't instinctively send your

Get in the hot seat for some enjoyable anti-aircraft gun action.

If you think this looks bad...

...check this one out.

mind rushing with tactical options. You decide your fleets' speed and formation and then set the time compression to maximum until you make visual contact with the enemy.

Then you switch to simulator mode and are transported to the various stations on your ships such as the bridge, the gunnery command and damage control. There's little to look at apart from dials and buttons as the sea is a bit short of landmarks.

Even when battle erupts it's a case of watching shells sail over to explode on tiny silhouettes on the horizon. You'd have to be a serious sea warfare fanatic to even consider trying to decipher this one.

PCZONE VERDICT **54**

Like a rat, leave this sinking ship

US RACER

■ £19.99 | Pub: Davilex | Dev: Davilex | ETA: Out Now

REQUIRES PIII 500, 128Mb RAM, 16 Mb 3D card **DESIRES** PIII 733, 128Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card

We told *Steve Hill* he was off to America for a little trip. We lied...

Hooray for Hollywood.

Mind that truck.

DAVILEX: your guarantee of mediocrity. The very name reeks of substandard games, sounding more like a cleaning product than an entertainment developer. They knock them out at a pace

though, furnishing us with such dubious delights as *M25 Racer*, the water-based *Thames London Racer*, and continuing the er... theme, wasn't there even a *Europe Racer*? We can't remember.

Either way, the US of A is the next logical step, and here it is, with 11 tracks, six zany characters, and no new ideas whatsoever. Creative thievery is the order of the day, with a sizeable lift from *Midtown*

Madness, in that races take place in busy cities with ambient traffic and over-aggressive police (no change there then).

The city-specific radio stations are straight out of *Grand Theft Auto*, although here they

begin to repeat over the course of a two-lap race. And if you want to look closer (and have played a lot of driving games), the scripted disaster sequences are similar to those of *Speed Busters*, and there's even a section of the Los Angeles track that's identical to that of *Supercar Street Challenge*, although that can be dismissed as coincidence.

The driving model is all their own though, and is largely unsatisfying. Opponents veer into each other, reducing races to a mess of automotive carnage, with very little actual racing to be had. It's vaguely playable for half an hour, but the uninstall option rapidly beckons.

The busies secure the Grand Canyon.

It's gridlock in New York.

PCZONE VERDICT **48**

Best work yet

CAR TYCOON

■ £19.99 | Pub: JoWood Productions | Dev: Vectorcom | ETA: March 29

REQUIRES PII 300 and 64Mb RAM (128Mb RAM for Win2000) **DESIRES** PIII 450 and a 16Mb 3D card

Steve O'Hagan gets involved in a messy pile-up

HAVE YOU EVER dreamed of being the cigar-chomping CEO of a major American automobile manufacturer making key decisions on chassis components, maintenance packages and consumer finance incentives? Neither have we.

Your goal in *Car Tycoon* is to become obscenely rich by building and selling cars. You do this by making cheaper cars than your competition, offering customers incentives such as free maintenance and bombarding the populace with ads. You can play a scenario, or just kick off in 1950 and plough through to 2005.

Things take place in the Sim-game standard overhead view of your city. It's colourful and busy, though looks blurry when you zoom in, but at least there has been an attempt to move away from the boring static screens so often found in games of this ilk.

In your world cars are only made up of four components.

We won't beat around the bush – *Car Tycoon* is otherwise generally pretty bad. There are crucial shortcomings in what decisions you can make, and the feedback you receive after you've made them. Take car manufacturing for example, each design is made up of only four components, all your cars are the same colour, and try as we might we couldn't even name any of them.

Worse still is trying to find any useful information. Virtually the only data on sales comes in the form of the all-too-brief annual report. Where are the screens showing which models are selling and what customers want?

The simulation is also dodgy. You decide to place your luxury car dealership in the rich neighbourhoods to boost sales. It doesn't work. Funny that, as we thought economic sims tended to function better based on the laws of economics.

Add in massive loading times, unexplained features, as well as bugs that can lock your PC, leaving messages in German on your screen, and you get a pretty repellent package. **PCZ**

PCZONE VERDICT 28
Send it to the big car compactor in the sky

A cemetery. Strangely apt.

MS PAC MAN

■ £9.99 | Pub: Infogrames | ETA: Out Now

ONE OF THE hardest of the early arcade games, *Pac Man* or *Ms Pac Man* (or any of the other variations of the original) is recognised as a true classic. So it's a shame then that a concept which is simplicity itself – run through a maze, chomping pills, avoiding ghosts and using the power-pills to turn the tables – is treated so contemptuously in this update.

Admittedly you can switch camera angles to get closer to the action, but you lose the view of the entire maze in the process. Pointless. There's also a Quest mode that provides you with animations marginally worse than those in the original 1980 cabinet and a completely redundant two-player mode built around variations of a single maze.

All-in-all, this is an update that cack-handedly manages to lose all the charm of the original (what happened to Blinky, Pinky, et al and their individual personalities?) without adding a single feature of note. Save your tenner for the pub. **DW**

New power-ups help relieve the boredom.

PCZONE VERDICT 34

COMBAT

■ £9.99 | Pub: Infogrames | ETA: Out Now

The more things change the more they get worse.

1977: punk, *Star Wars*, Combat. 2002: *Pop Idol*, *Star Wars: Episode II*, Combat. Things really have gone downhill on all three counts, which is a little unfair as we've yet to see George Lucas's latest stab at *Star Wars*. But on the gaming front, the rebirth of the first true multiplayer videogame really does prove that euthanasia is a good thing.

In 3D, offering only the 'tanks' game rather than the infinitely better 'biplanes' variant, new *Combat* has absolutely nothing in common with its ancient ancestor. Those that buy it in order to relive their wonder years will be sorely disappointed. Those that buy it for other reasons will just feel cheated.

Like the famous stack of Atari VCS ET cartridges, this game should have been buried in the Nevada desert. Absolutely f***ing rubbish. Thank God for the free emulator on the disk. **RS**

PCZONE VERDICT 9

REPLAY

Why pay full whack for a game, when you can get them for less than a tenner?

BEST BUY

1201 YARI CAVALRY
FIGHTING (LOSING BADLY)
STEADY
QUITE FRESH

Battles are truly epic affairs.

SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR

■ £9.99 | Pub: EA Classics | ETA: Out Now

SOME GAMES really are worth £30, even two years down the line. *Shogun: Total War* is one of them and to see it for a tenner – alongside the likes of the lesser games that fill this page – well, it feels cheapened.

But then, those that felt it worthy of extra notage would already have a copy. So for the rest of you, suspicious of real-time strategy games or anything that doesn't feature M-16s or rocket launchers, now is the perfect time to pick up a copy of one of the best war games ever made.

The setting, feudal Japan, is so captivating – partly because of the incredibly atmospheric sound, voices and soundtrack – that more than any other strategy game, you are literally transported to another world. Watching the battles rage from a windswept hill, it almost wants to make you charge into the mêlée and even when you lose a battle, it's hard to give up until the bitter end.

The over-used term 'easy to learn and hard to master' has never been more apt, and together with the dynamic AI, mix of real-time tactics and board game strategy – and of course the sheer scale of the actual battles, it really is one that you'll keep coming back to.

Normally we wouldn't do this since it's a lazy way to review a game, but if you need more convincing go to our wonderful website www.pczone.co.uk and read our old review that is archived there. Read it safe in the knowledge that though the graphics have dated a little, no game since has dented *Shogun*'s armour. It's still the best strategy game you can buy, for a tenner or otherwise, until of course the sequel arrives later this year.

Richie Shoemaker
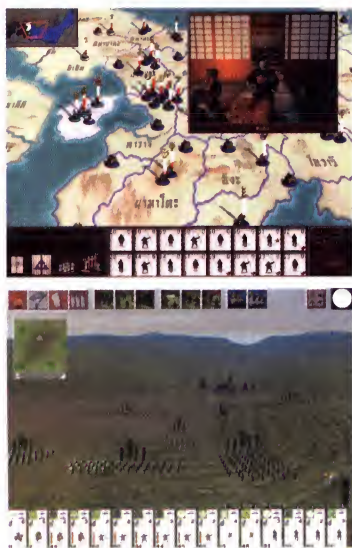
Shogun, the 'Total' RTS game.

PCZONE VERDICT 94

Forget *Return To Castle Wolfenstein*, this is the real thing.

CLIVE BARKER'S UNDYING

■ £9.99 | Pub: EA Classics | ETA: Out Now

ONE OF THE scariest games we've ever come across, *Undying* is also a stunner to look at. You might think that the old haunted house motif is far from being terrifying, but Clive Barker has added enough unnerving twists to unsettle the hardiest among you. Hellhounds that rush at you from all directions intent on ripping your head off and swallowing it whole are just the beginning, as teleporting nightmare creatures straight out of a Lovecraft story, and some very sick apparitions imbue every step with saliva-drying tension. The atmosphere is incredibly immersive thanks to a great use of sound and imagery, and there are a few original touches in the gameplay with the introduction of spells (some of which let you see into the past, others which make human enemies commit suicide before your very eyes).

Don't expect a storytelling masterpiece though. Barker's contribution has helped to flesh out characters and add some of his trademark weirdness, but the plot is very straightforward and undemanding. More the stuff of a 30-page comic book than a 500-page novel. The environments also lack in interaction, to the point where doors open by themselves and guide you through in a very linear fashion. Apart from those flaws though, *Undying* is still one of my favourite first-person shooters.

Mark Hill

PCZONE VERDICT 83

AMERICAN MCGEE'S ALICE

■ £9.99 | Pub: EA Classics | ETA: Out Now

IT MAY BE ONE of the laziest clichés in a game reviewer's arsenal, but 'a triumph of style over substance' describes *Alice* to a tee. Thanks to its ingenious use of the *Quake III* engine, the graphics are some of the best ever to grace a computer screen, while the architecture and character design ooze quality.

The opening video – one of the best I've ever seen, not for breathtaking looks but for sheer artistry – sets the tone nicely. After her adventures in Wonderland, a teenage Alice has ended up in a mental institution and attempted to commit suicide by slitting her wrists. Things get

"Who are you calling shorty?"

even weirder from there, as Alice is sucked once again into a surreal fantasy world, only to find that the already twisted Wonderland has turned into Hell.

Exploring this world is the closest a game has come to a bad acid trip, with weird angles and disturbing scenes easily outdoing *Max Payne*'s dream sequences. It's a shame that the gameplay – the substance – can't keep up with the style though. A third-person platform game with more arcade action that you usually find in *Tomb Raider*, *Alice* is also very difficult and frustrating. One for warped minds.

Mark Hill

The graphics are never boring.

PCZONE VERDICT 75

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS: DELUXE

■ £9.99 | Pub: Take Advantage | ETA: Out Now

Cool, crisp and clear, and the new graphics engine is pretty good too.

IT'S TESTAMENT to the quality of this title that, despite being riddled by bugs on first release, it's still regarded as a classic in many quarters. That said, it's usually dodgy to retread old ground, as nostalgia goggles are usually exposed as faltering memory. Visuals are usually the chief culprit but here the *Deluxe* cut has an ace card: the original developers have gone back in, tweaked the engine and provided a great excuse to go back in and see if the missions still stand the test of time.

While controlling a team of four soldiers through missions that are

The amazing un-usable timeline command interface.

reasonably compact compared to the recent *Ghost Recon*, there's a lot to find fault with. Where once it seemed a breeze to navigate, subsequent games have exposed it for a cumbersome fool and other elements still have the capacity to annoy – namely the 1999 AI and the fact that even when you've completed the mission's objectives, you have to move every last man to the exit point to progress.

Surprisingly though it's still massively playable, if a bit slow-moving. There are a few graphical glitches to contend with and we had a bit of trouble getting it running on a GeForce 3 system (although it worked like a charm on our older Matrox-based machine), but no one dropped through the floor and most of the other original troubles seem to have been put to rest. If you've already got it you won't want it again for the lick of paint, but for others it's a bargain if only for the chance to own a slice of gaming history.

Dave Woods

"I knew I'd parked it round here somewhere."

PCZONE VERDICT 86

COMMAND & CONQUER: TIBERIAN SUN

■ £9.99 | Pub: EA Classics | ETA: Out Now

GUTTED I WAS. Gutted I tell you, when this one originally came out. Almost four years of development, and what did we get? *C&C* with walking robots. It looked the same, it played the same – basically it was the same as its two predecessors. Actually, *Red Alert* was better. However, it was the first game in the series where the brotherhood of NOD (a terrorist group intent on world domination) campaign was more fun than the GDI (Global Defence Initiative) one which will surely appeal to the more evil-natured among you.

The two campaigns do throw up the occasional interesting tactical option, such a the NOD subterranean APC and the GDI AT-AT-like walker, which is so powerful you can only build one at a time. More often than not though, the whole affair degenerates into a farcical build-and-rush frenzy, where, after hours of amassing troops, you charge into the

2D, isometric, build and rush RTS averageness.

enemy base and hope like mad you've got enough units to overwhelm your foe. It's not big, it's not clever, it's just standard RTS fare with a *C&C* logo stamped across it.

Martin Korda

PCZONE VERDICT 70

LEFTOVERS

▲ **PLEASE SIR, CAN I HAVE SOME MORE SIR?**

No you can't. Ahhh, I'm only joking. You can have anything your heart desires, so long as it's in this column. Kicking off is an influx of games from our friends at Sold Out, which for the benefit of the person who wrote in to me asking why we review budget games only to flag them as being 'Sold Out' in the shops, is in fact the name of a budget games publisher.

First off then are *Pharaoh*, 70 per cent, and the far superior *Caesar III*, 84 per cent (£4.99 each), both of which are god games of varying competence. If your machine started creaking a couple of years ago and broke down when you tried to run *Zeus*, then go for *Caesar III*. If your computer was built before the Stone Age, and you prefer your strategy a bit more real-time and goblin-filled, then *Warcraft*, 50 per cent (£4.99), is one of your best bets for some RTS entertainment (although anyone else should avoid its dated gameplay and archaic graphics). *SWAT 2*, 65 per cent, is great value for less than a fiver, its stealth-orientated team-based gameplay throwing up plenty of tense hostage-rescuing situations. The less said about the pitifully basic *Red Baron 3D* (40 per cent) and the mind-numbingly dull *Army Men: World War* (30 per cent), the better – despite their £5 price tags.

The ancient *Incubation* (£9.99), will have nostalgics farting out exclamations of excitement. However, its turn-based missions can become incredibly involving once you see past the blocky visuals, and because of this it warrants a score of 60 per cent. Novalogic throw their hat back into the budget arena with re-releases of the commendable flight sim *F22-Lightning 3* (72 per cent), entertaining but shallow special forces shooter *Delta Force* (66 per cent), arcadey 'copter sim *Comanche 3* – which is fun in small doses (64 per cent), and *Tachyon: The Fringe*, a relatively freeform if overly simplistic space combat sim, with some great online options (72 per cent), all of which ship at £4.99. To round things off this month is Activision's bundle of *Star Trek: Voyager – Elite Force* (£19.99) and its add-on pack. Recent FPS releases have put it well and truly in the shade, but *Star Trek* fans will still get some enjoyment out of it. 70 per cent.

Martin Korda

Caeser III

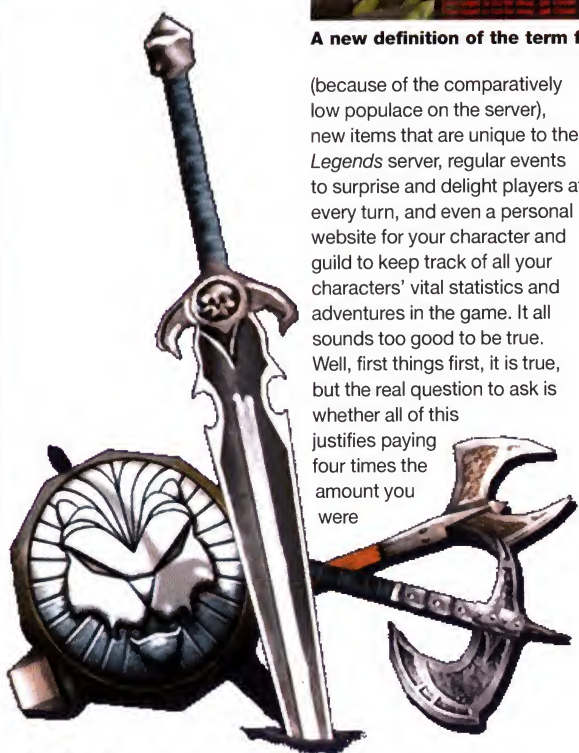Delta Force

Voyager: Elite Force

UPDATES

A place for single-player redemption and multiplayer action

EVERQUEST LEGENDS

ON THE DVD ■ US$40 per month | Dev: Verant Interactive | ETA: Out Now | www.everquest.com | Players: No limit

ONLINE ONLY

REQUIRES PII 400, 256Mb RAM, a 3D card and a 56K modem **DESIRES** 512Mb RAM, 32Mb graphics card, an ADSL connection

What do you get for the EverQuest player who has it all? *PC ZONE* **legend, Chris Anderson, checks out the new Premier League**

"There are new items and quests but nobody knows where most of them are yet"

THE NEW *EverQuest* 'pay more and ye shall receive more' *Legends* server has just gone live. So what's all the fuss about?

In theory, the *Legends* server should be a wonderful thing. New quests, more GMs to help players when they get in trouble, a much better connection

paying to play the original game with its expansions.

It's obviously too early to tell if the exclusive *Legends* server will deliver on all its promises. Only time will tell if new zones and items are enough to keep people playing *EverQuest* at such a hefty price. For now, I can give you a brief run-down of

A new definition of the term frog marching.

(because of the comparatively low populace on the server), new items that are unique to the *Legends* server, regular events to surprise and delight players at every turn, and even a personal website for your character and guild to keep track of all your characters' vital statistics and adventures in the game. It all sounds too good to be true. Well, first things first, it is true, but the real question to ask is whether all of this justifies paying four times the amount you were

the pros and cons of *Legends* at this early stage in its existence.

PROS

There are more GMs ingame. They are everywhere. I sent in a query with a problem and it was answered in 20 minutes. This never happens on a regular server. Never.

There are more events, and they are much better than the ones on normal servers, which basically entail a GM spawning a huge amount of high-level monsters which proceed to kill everything in the zone they land in. Saying that, it remains to be seen whether this will capture the imagination of players on a regular basis.

There are new items and quests but nobody knows what or where most of them are yet. This is the part of

Legends that will be key to its success, and we'll come back to this side of things at a later date.

CONS

The personal web page. Does anyone really care? Answer: no. However, elaborate web pages aside, there is really only one con, but it's a damned big one: the price. Do you really want to play US$40 per month instead of US$10 for what is essentially the same game? Even the new items and new and revamped zones will make their way to the old servers soon enough (the new improved Cazic Thule is already set to go live on the old servers).

Please remember this is by no means a definitive review though, and the situation could change dramatically when more is known about exactly what the *Legends* server has to offer that the old ones don't (from a players point of view, not Sony's). However, first impressions strongly suggest that *Legends* is only for those with more money than sense, at least in its current form. We will come back to it in a few issues to give you our definitive verdict. **PCZ**

PCZONE VERDICT **75**

A great idea if you have money to burn

MEDAL OF HONOR MULTIPLAYER

■ £29.99 | Pub: EA | Dev: 2015 | ETA: Out Now | http://mohaa.ea.com | Players: 2-32

REQUIRES PII 450, 64Mb RAM, 16Mb 3D card and a 56k modem **DESIRES** PIII 600, 128Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card and an ADSL connection

After a thorough polishing of his helmet, *Matt Cheshire* prepares to go to war

WHEN *Medal Of Honor* finally arrived on my desk, it was one of the happiest moments of my year so far. I was stunned when I first saw the game at E3 last May, and needless to say, when I played the single-player game I was suitably pleased that my expectations were justified. One thing I hadn't expected,

however, was the quality of the multiplayer game.

For a start, there are plenty of servers to choose from either via the game's in-built server browser or through GameSpy Arcade. Lag is minimal even with a high ping rate, which makes for a fluid and exciting game. There are four game

Atmospheric and tense, just like the single-player game.

types to play: free-for-all, team match, round-based match and objective-based match. These are all types of game we have seen before. Free-for-all is a traditional, every-man-for-himself game and plays brilliantly on the smaller maps even if there is an over-emphasis on sniping. Team match is, quite obviously, the same game but with two teams (Axis and Allies) and objective mode is similar to that of the bomb maps of *Counter-Strike*.

The round-based match is basically a team deathmatch game, but with each team having to reach a kill target before the opposition.

One thing that could have worked well is Capture The Flag, and it's a shame that it's missing since its inclusion would have made *MOH* complete. Even so, *Medal Of Honor* is, unlike most other shooters, every bit as good in multiplayer as it is playing by yourself. If you think of yourself as a gamer and you

don't already have a copy of *Medal Of Honor* then you've been giving yourself airs way above your station. This is a game that absolutely everyone should own. **PCZ**

PCZONE VERDICT	
FULL REVIEW (ISSUE 114)	94
MULTIPLAYER SCORE	**94**
Every bit as good as the single-player game	

COMBAT MISSION

■ £29.99 | Pub: CDV | Dev: Battlefront | ETA: Out Now | www.cdv.de | Players: 2

REQUIRES PII 200, 32Mb RAM **DESIRES** PIII 450, 128Mb RAM, 16Mb 3D card

Daniel Emery signs up for *Combat Mission*. Will the near-miss become a hit?

LAST August when we first reviewed it, *Combat Mission* caused a bit of a stir on the Internet. A 3D WWII turn-based strategy game that looked stunning (and played well too) was a rare thing indeed. The only drawback was its hefty price tag (US$45), and the fact you could only buy it online. Seven months later, and things have changed somewhat – a new publisher, a reworked graphics engine and a second CD full of missions and utilities. But is it any cop?

The graphics engine is now all smoke, explosions and some very realistic models. However, while the game's designers may be artists, they still need to learn about code optimisation. Running the game on a Voodoo 5500 caused the graphics to 'white out' during large intensive scenarios. Turning the chip down to a low performance setting fixed the problem, but you lose most of the effects.

The second CD is an excellent addition, and extends the life of the game tenfold. But

the front end is unhelpful at best, with no hot links or installers for the software, and scant instructions on how to do it manually. Expect to do a lot of CD swapping and buggering about. And sadly, despite all this, the developers still haven't got a descent campaign mode worked in: it's still all just single scenarios.

Overall the game has improved with numerous tweaks to AI pathing, control interface and gameplay. Although it's not a classic, it's still a must for any discerning strategy fan, and as a whole, the package is a definite improvement since the last time we cast our eyes over it. **PCZ**

The control interface is simple and easy.
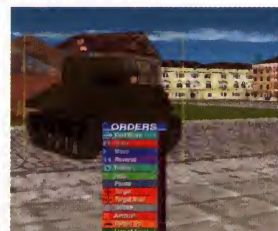
PCZONE VERDICT	
ORIGINAL SCORE	75
NEW SCORE	**79**
Better, but still a long way to go	

PCZ SPORTS SUPERTEST

After hours of thumb exercises, the *ZONE* panel discuss the merits and pitfalls of sports sims. *Mark Hill* hands out the towels

"The best thing a sports game can do is just have two different buttons with which you can do loads of different things without really having to think about it"

MARK HILL ON WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT *VIRTUA TENNIS*

FIFA 2002's new passing system hasn't gone down too well.

SWEAT, BALLS AND KEYBOARDS

Sports games are usually associated with consoles, which explains why three of the games in this month's Supertest are conversions. As always, we don't pull any punches criticising any of the games, and there was plenty of disagreement when it came to choosing the winner. So if you want the truth about sports games on the PC, read on.

THE CONTENDERS

FIFA 2002
ISSUE 110 – 63%

PGA CHAMP GOLF 2000
ISSUE 92 – 84%

TONY HAWK'S 3
ISSUE 115 – 86%

VIRTUAL POOL 3
ISSUE 99 – 85%

VIRTUA TENNIS
ISSUE 114 – 80%

THE JURY

ANTHONY HOLDEN

DAVE WOODS

MARK HILL

STEVE HILL

MARTIN KORDA

Mark: We should start by discussing whether the PC is a good platform for sports games at all. After all, they're made for a bunch of people to play in front of the same screen, which isn't what the PC is about.
Steve: You don't want someone in your bedroom.
Martin: But if you look at the non-ported games here, like *PGA*, you wouldn't get that sort of detail and depth in a console.
Dave: If you play a golf game on a console, they're gonna have heads three times bigger than normal.
Martin: The PC offers more realism, more hardcore gameplay.
Mark: *PGA* and *Virtual Pool* would only really work on the PC. They're best played with a mouse and keyboard and work well online. The rest you want to play face-to-face against people. We should count ourselves lucky that we can get the best of both worlds.

FIFA 2002

Mark: So, Steve, why is this one worse than previous versions?
Steve: They've messed around with the passing system, so you always pass the ball into space, and you don't want to. You want the ball to go straight to your man. It just slows the whole game down.
Dave: It's a good idea. They've tried to open the game up, but you need a button that just passes it to your nearest man.
Steve: It stops you playing passing football, because the ball either ends up over the line or goes to the opposition, so you

just try and dribble it all the way.
Martin: Once you get used to the system, it's quite easy to use.
Anthony: As a non-football fan (and someone who pronounces the game Fy-fah) I found the control system counter-intuitive, archaic and clunky in the extreme.
Mark: It's not helped by the fact that the whole gameplay is slowed down by the animations. Running, turning and kicking all have their animation and take away any fluidity. It's not smooth at all.
Steve: They do run like they've all fouled themselves.
Dave: And the graphics look crap.
Steve: But having said all that, you can still have a great two-player game. You'd never sit at home and play it on your own, but it's fun with someone else.

Martin: It's too easy to go on ridiculous, 50-yard mazy runs, though.
Steve: With *Pro Evolution Soccer* (a *PlayStation 2* game, *and acknowledged in these parts as the best football game in the world – Ed*) the passing and the position all feels right.
Dave: You feel like you're playing real football, with the same moves you see on TV
Korda: In *FIFA*, you just end up playing the long ball backwards and forwards. The defender always gets there before the attacker, lobs it back and you start all over again.
Dave: Commentary is good, and presentation and music are fantastic. *PES* uses *Champ Man*'s stats though, so it feels more real.
Steve: Yeah, the *Champ Man* team play *PES* all the time.

THE SHAPE OF BALLS TO COME

NOT MUCH ON THE HORIZON FOR THE PC

Sports games have always been bigger on console and the new generation has only made things worse. There's very little to get excited about in the near future on the PC. Basketball fans will be furious to know that *NBA Live 2002* will only be appearing on consoles and not the PC. Worry not, though, brilliant though the series is, we doubt there's much new. Get the *2001* version in the bargain bin if you haven't already got it.

One update you can't escape is the next *FIFA* game, in this case a cash-in on the

World Cup. When it comes out in April, it will probably be identical to *2002* except that it will revolve around the big tournament and have better presentation. Big frigging deal.

While there's still no sign of a new *PGA* game, the next *Links* title will be *Links 2003*, coming out at the end of the year. As well as much improved graphics, the series will introduce its own version of the TrueSwing system. We shall see how it compares with *PGA*'s.

And of course, we always have *Pet Soccer* to look forward to...

Despite being a shoddy conversion, *Virtua Tennis* still rules multiplayer.

Martin: Why doesn't someone just convert it to the PC?
Dave: They should be able to. Microsoft has ported over Konami's *Metal Gear Solid*, they should be able to do this.
Mark: *FIFA* still outsells *PES* on the PS2 though.
Steve: That's because most people are morons.
Mark: Like Steve said once, football games recreate the TV coverage rather than the real thing. How long can EA keep releasing the same game though?
Steve: They can get away with it forever.
Anthony: People are just stupid.
Mark: We should mention some other EA Sports games, though. Personally I think the *NBA Live* series is fantastic. There are other really good basketball games too, like *Inside Drive* from Microsoft.
Steve: The *NHL* series is great too.
Dave: But we're not including them because they're all American and don't really sell over here. So, *FIFA* is still the best football game on the PC, which isn't really saying much.

VIRTUA TENNIS

Dave: You can pick it up in ten seconds, but it takes a lot of practice to master all the intricacies.
Martin: Rubbish, I beat Steve

"It has a proper single-player game, it's not something you have to play against someone else"

DAVE WOODS ON TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3

the first time I played it and he's been playing it for years.
Steve: I was trying to get the controls working. Anyway, I'm used to playing against the computer so I use different tactics.
Mark: This is a Dreamcast game, itself a port of an arcade machine, and is considered by some to be the very best game on that console. But this is a rather pedestrian port, right?
Steve: It's a really shoddy conversion. The graphics aren't nearly as good as on the Dreamcast. When you get a cloud, the whole screen goes dark. It's like the end of the world, while on the DC you barely noticed.
Martin: And the interface isn't as clear as it could be.
Anthony: There are not years of gameplay in there, it's pure arcade. But they have added loads to it. The single-player campaign is really good and all the training mini-games are great.
Mark: And there are real players for a change, which does make

"Golf games are the one case where the simulation is better than the real life"

ANTHONY HOLDEN ON THE JOYS OF PGA GOLF

a difference.
Dave: It's fantastic in multiplayer, you could literally play it for hours.
Anthony: It's most fun when two players take on the AI at doubles.
Martin: I prefer *Tennis Masters Series* in single-player mode, purely because it's more complicated. It takes longer to master but the AI is fantastic and there are four different types of shots you can do, with all sorts of spins.
Mark: But the best thing a sports game can do is just have two different buttons with which you can do loads of different things without really having to think about it, which is what *Virtua Tennis* does.
Martin: But it's a very arcade-like experience, far faster than real tennis. And it doesn't have as much depth as *Tennis Masters*.
Mark: I'd say *Tennis Masters* is far too slow, it suffers from the same problem as *FIFA* in that the animations slow everything down. You don't feel you're controlling a real player, just a set of animations. It's like moving underwater.
Martin: I'm not saying *VT* isn't great, I just prefer the pace and feel of *Tennis Masters*.
Steve: *Sensible Soccer* only needed one button, and that's

one of the greatest sports games ever made. It's the same with *VT*.
Martin: This one is intuitive it's just so easy to get to grips with the controls.
Mark: So a thumbs-up from everyone. For pure arcade fun this is untouchable, even if it is a second-rate conversion.

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3

Martin: *Tony Hawk's*?! It's not a f*****g sport, a guy rolling around on a piece of wood.
Dave: Where are the balls?
Steve: I'm not getting involved, it's got more in common with a driving game. It's not a sport.
Mark: Of course it's a sport, it's an extreme sport.
Martin: I think it's one of those games where you feel too detached from it when you're using a gamepad, you need one of those things…
Dave: A skateboard controller?
Martin: That's right. You're just pressing a bunch of buttons in a certain order.
Anthony: Isn't that what games are?
Martin: I disagree completely. Once you get into it, and I don't mean learning loads of tricks, just the general mechanics of the game, it's totally involving.
Anthony: It's a great game and, unlike *Virtua Tennis*, it's a really polished conversion.
Mark: That's right, this is one of the best console to PC ports ever. They should all be like this.

For sheer exhilarating fun, nothing beats *Tony Hawk's 3*.

Dave: And it has a proper single-player game, it's not something you have to play against someone else.
Mark: It has no realism whatsoever. It's traded in for pure exhilarating fun.
Steve: It also has some of the best music in a game ever.
Mark: Not as good as the music in *Tony Hawk's 2* though.
Steve: Personally I'd say the music in *TH3* is slightly better. Also the levels are far more open and there's a lot more to do in

each of them than before.
Mark: What about all of those complex controls? I have no time for them personally. They're for ten-year-old consoleheads. I just love enjoying the sheer sense of speed and movement.
Anthony: But the main thing is the unlocking of new levels in the campaign mode.
Mark: Yeah, that's what keeps you going.
Dave: But has it got any longevity?
Mark: Yes, it has. You do keep playing it, because there's so much to do and so many rewards along the way. I love it.
Dave: It could do with power-ups.
Mark: There's a specials bar that builds up as you pull off moves and the higher it goes the more combos you can do. Plus you can improve the stats of your skater.
Martin: In that way it's quite unique. In all the other games you're stuck with the stats that come with the game, but here you can change them.

PGA GOLF

Anthony: Golf games are the one case where the simulation is better than real life. You don't have to lug a heavy bag around a course on a cold morning.
Dave: Well the idea is to get so good someone else to do that for you. But *PGA* is absolutely brilliant.

Mark: It is the best online sports game at the moment.
Dave: It works really well. There's no question of lag or anything, because it's turn-based.
Martin: Are there any goblins?
Dave: I'm sure you can put them in.
Martin: What really makes this game work is the TrueSwing system, where you move the mouse forward to recreate a proper golf swing. It's much better than the Tri-click method.

PGA Golf is possibly the most relaxing game ever made.

Anthony: I love the Tri-click system.

Martin: At least *PGA* gives you the option. With the TrueSwing you can cheat by using the edge of a book and running your mouse along it really fast so that your shot goes straight.

Dave: Keith Pullin does that, the dirty rotter.

Steve: But you use the mouse to fade left or right too.

Dave: Yeah, you can slice the ball by the way you move the mouse, and it's really satisfying once you've mastered it. Keith Pullin who plays it online probably uses a hammer to drive the mouse while keeping it straight with a book.

Martin: That's why he was rubbish when he came to play it in the office once. He couldn't use his book, so he was all over the place.

Mark: You need to play it in multiplayer, otherwise, if you're anything like me, you just want to mulligan your way through, repeating each shot that goes slightly awry.

Martin: It's a shame about the crowds, they're like cardboard cut-outs. You take a shot and there's this hoard of faces standing around you.

Steve: There's plenty they can do to update it, though. The Windows interface looks really antiquated now, sort of mid-'90s.

Mark: I've got to say it's by far the most relaxing game here,

possibly the most relaxing game ever.

Anthony: It's a perfect hangover game.

Dave: I used to play it online with my brother on a Sunday evening when we were both really hung over. It was that or *Heartbeat*.

Martin: And you can dress your golfer up in ridiculous costumes.

Steve: What is this, a Barbie and Ken-'em-up?

Mark: They do look like Sims actually.

Dave: It is really good, but there's room for improvement.

VIRTUAL POOL 3

Dave: This is about as good a conversion of pool as you can get on the PC. But you can't get rid of the fact that you can't walk around the table to get the perfect view of the shot. It's easy to misjudge angles because of that. It's great, but pool will never work properly as a computer game.

Mark: This is probably the most redundant sport sim here. You're never going to play in a Premiership team or pull crazy skateboarding stunts, but anyone can go down to the pub for a game of pool.

Dave: Ahh, but you do get to play in the gorgeous Jeanette Lee's house.

Mark: The physics are really, really good. If you're rubbish at real pool, like me, you can learn about things like angles and how spin works.

Mark: But the overhead views sometimes seem completely different to the 3D view, so you look from above and think you've got the right angle and then when you shoot you find out it isn't.

Great physics make *VP3* a decent substitute for the real thing.

Steve: That's why I prefer playing pool games overhead, because you can picture the angles better.

Dave: You did beat the real *Jimmy White* at pool though, didn't you?

Steve: Yeah, but he was absolutely legless.

Martin: There was a massive mistake in the original release in that the snooker mode wouldn't work properly. The scoring system was all wrong. There's a patch that corrects that though.

Mark: Snooker is really good on it.

Steve: But it's even more laborious than pool. It's just like

real life, no one can play snooker for real. No one gets a break of over ten, it's too difficult.

Mark: It's a great head-to-head game.

Martin: We spent hours playing it in the office when it came out.

Mark: After *Quake III* and *Counter-Strike* this is the game that's taken up most work time in the office. And like *Tony Hawk's* it has a career mode, so it has single-player longevity. You open up new tables, bet money…

Martin: It's incredibly addictive. You can just stick it on and have a quick five-minute game. Just like *PGA*, it's really relaxing. **PCZ**

AND THE WINNER IS…

IT'S ANOTHER CLOSE CALL, BUT VIRTUA TENNIS IT IS

Brows were furrowed deeply when it came to choosing a winner, with Martin clutching his head in desperation and saying: "I simply can't decide." But after we'd threatened to cut off his ponytail, his mind was made up. "It's has to be *Virtua Tennis*, the AI is really good and it's extremely easy to play."

Anthony and Steve followed suit. "It has a brilliant control interface and is the most

fun game here," said Ant, while Steve went all misty eyed and pronounced that "*Sensible Soccer* only needed one button, and that's one of the greatest sports games ever made. It's the same with *Virtua Tennis*."

Dave and Mark were the only dissenting voices. "It has to be *PGA* if only for saving

me from all those episodes of *Heartbeat*," said Dave.

While Mark said: "Nothing comes close to *Tony Hawk's*, it's just brilliant."

In the end though, *Virtua Tennis* – despite the fact that it was sloppily converted, which lost it points in the review – is this month's deserving winner.

THE VERDICT

IT WAS REALLY CLOSE AND PEOPLE HAD TO THINK HARD TO CHOOSE A FAVOURITE, BUT IN THE END WE HAD A CLEAR WINNER.
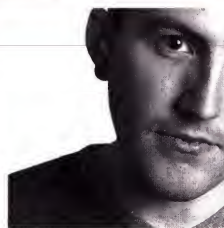
	ANTHONY	DAVE	MARK	STEVE	MARTIN
BEST GAME	Virtua Tennis	PGA	Tony Hawk's 3	Virtua Tennis	Virtua Tennis
RUNNER UP	Tony Hawk's 3	Virtua Tennis	Virtua Tennis	Virtual Pool 3	Virtual Pool 3
MULTIPLAYER	Virtua Tennis	Virtua Tennis	Virtua Tennis	FIFA	Virtua Tennis

REALITY CHECK:
TEAM-BASED SHOOTERS

There's a war going on, and the gang's all here. *Steve Hill* **leads the charge**

I LOVE the smell of paint in the morning. It smells of… victory. That's not strictly true, although it is definitely morning, and there will be paint involved.

To test the authenticity of games that involve shooting people in the face, we drew the line at joining the army, opting instead for the relative safety of paintball: war without bullets. Amazingly, six members of the *ZONE* team have managed to get themselves on a train at 08:00 hours of a Saturday. Destination: deepest Surrey, where military fantasies can be enacted without having to come home in an oak cloak.

The boot camp is an impressive set-up, and amidst

VIEWS FROM THE FRONT LINE

Dave 'White Trainers' Woods: "The day was just like a first-person shooter. It started off really well when we captured the flag and ended up like a piece of shit, getting six pellets up the arse in Speedball Arena."
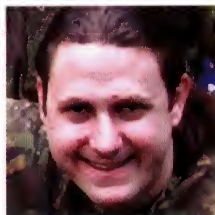
Martin 'Rambo' Korda: "I wouldn't say there was as much teamwork as a group of people sitting in a room playing *Counter-Strike*. Everyone was just running in there occasionally shouting incoherently. But it was fun."

Phil 'Shit-kickin' Clark: "It was great. Fantastic. I haven't had so much fun in ages, not even playing computer games. I enjoyed this more than *Counter-Strike*. But I'd get bored with it, whereas *Counter-Strike* has got more life to it."
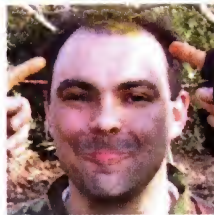
Colin 'Private Godfrey' Mackleworth: "It's not like when I was in the TA. And it doesn't hurt enough. You need some pain to get you going, and the pain that you experience paintballing is not severe enough."

Anthony 'Hopper' Holden: "First-person shooters are far better than paintball. It was just like running around on school camp with stupid paint guns. You can't communicate with each other and the mud smells like faeces."

REAL

VS
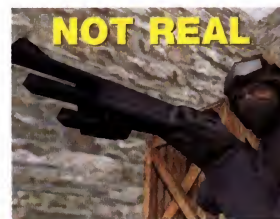
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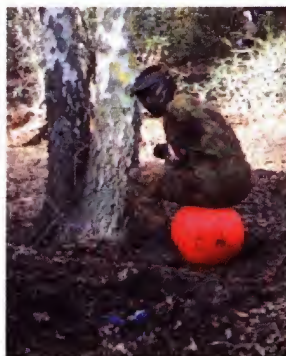
Steve Hill in the woods unloading goo into the faces of terrified young men. Nothing changes.

COMPETITION

Win a day out for four at Campaign Paintball Park

Campaign Paintball Park, set in over 200 acres of Surrey forest, is one of the largest paintball parks in the UK. For over ten years it has been staging corporate paintball events as well as being open to the general public, and has a collection of 12 purpose-built paintball arenas. You're provided with the very best in paintballing technology, including the latest Inferno 2002 semi-automatic paintball guns, cammo uniform and all-new full-face goggles. For more information on the park and its facilities, check out www.campaignpaintball.com. And while you're there, see if you can find the answer to the question below – you might just win yourself and three mates a day paintballing, with 1,000 bullets thrown in for good measure as well as a free lunch.

QUESTION: How large is the Congo playing field at Campaign Paintball Park?

■ Send your answers on a postcard with your name, age, address, email and phone number to Paintball Compo, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD, by May 8 2002.

Terms and conditions: To enter, you must be at least 16 years old. Dennis Publishing does not take any responsibility for any injuries or accidents that may occur. The winning tickets are issued by Campaign Paintball Park in accordance to its usual terms and conditions.

the pounding rock music and haze of smoke, you could almost think you were back in 'Nam. Today's army is over a hundred strong, comprising a bulk of rookies and a smattering of veterans, some even bring their own guns.

The obligatory safety briefing stresses that goggles must be worn at all times, as paintballs travel at 150mph, and will take your eye out, leaving you blind, unable to see, without vision, in a world of blackness, reading Braille, relying on a dog, tapping the streets with a stick, living like Stevie Wonder… We get the message, and eventually the games commence.

PAINTBALL'S COMING HOME
First up is a simple CTF. You'd think we'd be naturals, but it's a cagey opening with neither side making any inroads. However, after switching ends, Woods and Holden make a bold attempt on the enemy flag, the plucky antipodean newshound emerging from the shrubbery and sprinting back to base for a famous victory. This is slightly tarnished when it emerges that the *ZONE* pair had inadvertently slain their own team captain who was about to capture the flag himself. Still, there are always casualties in war.

The next game involves an assault on a hut full of enemy, and is memorable for Korda's Rambo-esque dash to the window, where he unloads his weapon into a group of whelping cowards. Defending the hut is a different story though, and after straying too close to a window, I am shot in the shoulder, screaming like a virgin before ignominiously retiring. One hit and you're dead, unless you're lucky enough or fat enough for the bullets to bounce off you.

FRIGHTENING THE BIRDS
We're not sure if the third game is based on an actual military incident, but the goal is to pilot a space-hopper into the enemy's base. Still stinging from the previous round, I decide to camp out in a tree house with art editor Phil, crucially conserving ammo – a sensible ploy at six pence a shot. Holden again takes the initiative though, and one of the more bizarre sights of the day is a grown man in military fatigues straddling a child's toy while wielding a pretend gun. Pathetic.

The final mission is Speedball Arena, whereby an oversized ball must be kicked or punched into the opponent's goal. The start is a mad charge for territory amidst a hail of bullets, one of which shatters against my face mask, filling my mouth with acrid yellow paint. Spitting poison, I stagger towards the dead zone, but not before some ungracious f***wit decides to unload a dozen rounds into me, provoking language not heard since the latest Tourette's documentary.

Beaten and bruised, we retire to the local hostelry to numb the pain with strong continental lager and live Premiership football. Now that's a proper sport.

> "One of the more bizarre sights is a grown man in military fatigues straddling a child's toy"

HOW REAL IS... COUNTER-STRIKE?

GO… GO… GO!
In terms of the outdoor locations, the one-hit kills rule, even buying your ammo before each game – paintball is arguably a live action version of *Counter-Strike*.

James Newman is a marshal at Campaign Paintball and also a member of a *CS* clan (w92.org). As he says: "I've even taken techniques from paintball and applied them to my own *Counter-Strike* team. Things like strafing left and right is exactly the same as darting outside the barricades, firing off a few rounds and popping back in." James also designs paintball maps, and admits: "I've actually stolen ideas from *Counter-Strike* to use as paintball games. But things like Capture The Flag, that's a paintball thing, and paintball's been going for decades."

SCORE

HOW REAL IS... UNREAL TOURNAMENT?

I'VE GOT THE ENEMY FLAG
Admittedly, an instagib Capture The Flag game employs the same fundamental principles as a paintball game, in that one shot kills. However, in paintball you have to trudge off the field with your arm in the air when you're killed, whereas in *UT* you respawn seconds later as good as new. Also, paintball is generally played in some private woodland, as opposed to a floating space station. And it involves schlepping through the mud, ruining your shoes, as opposed to bouncing all over the place in some kind of futuristic jumpsuit. Playing it online, the teamplay aspect is comparable though, in that everyone runs round like an idiot with no clue as to what the others are doing.

SCORE
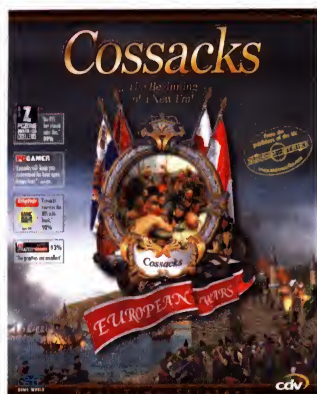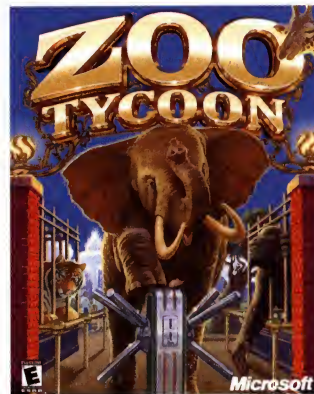
HARDWARE

DISHING THE DIRT

■ **HARD WIRED** Tim Ponting

▲ Well, well. Last month's new-look issue seems to have gone down alright with you lot – and judging by the fact my inbox isn't full of hate mail from people disagreeing with the conclusions of the motherboard and processor round-up, it would appear the hardware section has survived its first outing. And no, that's not an invitation for the oiks out there to apply finger to keyboard and crucify me.

This month, we're pretty lucky to have got a couple of GeForce 4 cards for testing hot off the presses, and as luck would have it, a pair of Radeon 8500-based cards have finally made it to the *ZONE* tech bench. We'd just about given up on ever getting an 8500-based card for review, but now they're here it's the perfect opportunity to pit them against the new chipset from NVIDIA and the older GeForce 3 cards. Feast your eyes on the round-up that starts on page 104. We spent a gruelling seven solid days testing benchmarking on six boards under Windows XP, and we've re-jigged our benchmark procedure at long last. *Quake III Arena*, bless it, has been kicked out in favour of the altogether more modern *Return To Castle Wolfenstein*. Vive la revolution!

On another note, we recently spent an afternoon in the company of VideoLogic techoid guru David Harold, who unveiled the next iteration of the Kyro II card, and talked extensively about VideoLogic's ever-burgeoning audio product portfolio. Would he be drawn on Kyro III? Check out what he has to say. Speaking as a man who takes 'geek' to new levels of social unacceptability, I can't wait…

▼

VideoLogical Progression

Videologic spills the beans on its latest hardware line-up

UK VETERAN VIDEOLOGIC is due to unveil the latest iteration of its graphics card line featuring the Kyro range of chipsets from ST Microelectronics, at the CeBIT 2002 show in Germany.

As we exclusively revealed last month, ST Microelectronics has announced it is to leave the consumer PC market, which effectively means the company is looking for a buyer for the entire Kyro chipset business. We understand them to be at an advanced stage of negotiation with possible buyers (many have proposed that the main suitor could be Via Technology, though this appears to be little more than idle speculation) and an announcement is expected by the time this magazine is in your hand. What this does mean is that the next-generation Kyro chipset (dubbed 'Kyro III') has been delayed for a few months while the transfer of business is completed.

In the meantime, consumers will be able to buy cards based on an updated Kyro II core known as Kyro II SE. This is basically the same chip, but running at a higher clockspeed of 200MHz for both core and memory (KII ran at 175MHz), and utilising single data rate (SDR) memory as before. This part is called the STG4800 in ST Microelectronics parlance, and is to debut in boards from both VideoLogic and Hercules shortly. However, Hercules was unable to give cast iron confirmation of specifications at the time of going to press.

KYRO II SE REVEALED

VideoLogic's Kyro II SE is dubbed the Vivid!XS Elite, and we can exclusively reveal the work that has gone on behind the scenes to improve the performance. Not only has the clockspeed been cranked up – VideoLogic has also put a great deal of work into the drivers to improve performance. This includes full use of the SSE instruction set supported by latest-generation AMD and Intel platforms.

Kyro II's weak spot in comparison with its competition (such as NVIDIA's GeForce 2 MX400), was its lack of support for hardware

A cranked-up Kyro II should provide serious performance at a budget price.

transform and lighting. The new enhanced T&L feature of Kyro II SE is particularly interesting. When a game is recognised as supporting hardware T&L, Kyro II SE uses a special piece of code optimised specifically for the Kyro architecture that runs much faster than the software T&L services supplied by DirectX. In other words, the game recognises the Kyro II SE as a hardware T&L product, even though it isn't. As a result, you get much better performance than if the same game was running with non-optimised software T&L. It's obviously not as fast as a true hardware T&L product, but makes the SE more competitive in current-generation hardware T&L games against Radeon and the faster GeForce 2 MX cards.

KYRO III ON THE HORIZON

It's also been confirmed unofficially that Kyro III (if indeed it will be called that under the new owners of the brand), is to use enhanced

> **"ST Microelectronics has announced it is to leave the consumer PC market, which means the company is looking for a buyer for the entire Kyro chipset business"**

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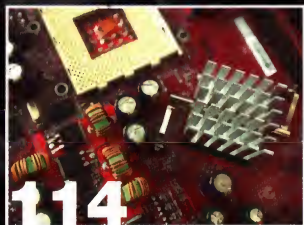
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BUYER'S GUIDE
The best kit at the best prices

PowerVR Series 4 technology: Kyro 2/SE is a Series 3 part. Speculation has been rife online for nearly a year now, but comments made by ST Microelectronics staff over the last few months suggest that Kyro 3 will at last feature a full hardware transform and lighting engine, though it's still very much sticking with the tile-based rendering techniques that have made PowerVR so efficient in terms of memory bandwidth requirements. Running at much higher clockspeeds (250-300MHz has been touted) and most likely built on a 0.13 micron die, the chipset will also make the transition to Double Data Rate (DDR) RAM. The number of pixel-rendering pipelines is also rumoured to have doubled from two to four, and it's even been suggested that Kyro III can support up to 128Mb of RAM, and like GeForce 4 and Radeon 8500 will support dual monitor usage. Only time will tell, but we hope to have the exclusive skinny from the lion's mouth soon.

SOUND FOR A FEW POUNDS

On the audio side, VideoLogic has also been busy, though many announcements are still some way off. The £80 ZXR-500 5.1 speaker system, which arrived just too late for our speaker round-up in issue 111, is selling extremely well – watch out for a full review in *ZONE* shortly. This is to be joined by a 2.1 system called the ZXR-200 using the same technology. And the same rather attractive brushed silver finish!

At the recent Bristol Sound and Vision show, VideoLogic also showed a new version of the popular Sirocco Spirit 2.0 speaker system. This uses the same custom-

made Audax woofer and tweeter cones as those used in VideoLogic's recently launched Sat 4 speakers found in the LiFE 4/10 system – and considering these cost £225 each, the new Spirits could be very attractive indeed – provided the price doesn't skyrocket.

When pressed on the subject of soundcards, a company spokesman revealed somewhat cryptically that "it would seem likely that VideoLogic will continue to work with Turtle Beach after the success of the Sonic Fury/Santa Cruz platform." In other words, we reckon there could be some exciting new soundcard products in the pipeline. We'll bring you more on this as and when we hear it.

VideoLogic's cheap 5.1 system in all its shiny glory.

PRIC£WATCH

A regular look at the fluctuating cost of processors and memory

WELL, MEMORY'S still going up. It's a commodity market, so there's no question of price fixing – it's just the way it is. Interestingly, 256Mb of PC133 SDR RAM and PC2100 DDR RAM cost exactly the same amount, so there's absolutely no point in purchasing a motherboard that doesn't support DDR RAM in today's market.
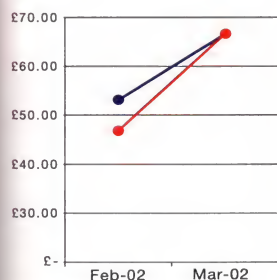
Price per 256Mb RAM:
● **PC133 SDR**
● **PC2100 DDR**

MAY 2002 PROCO CHART
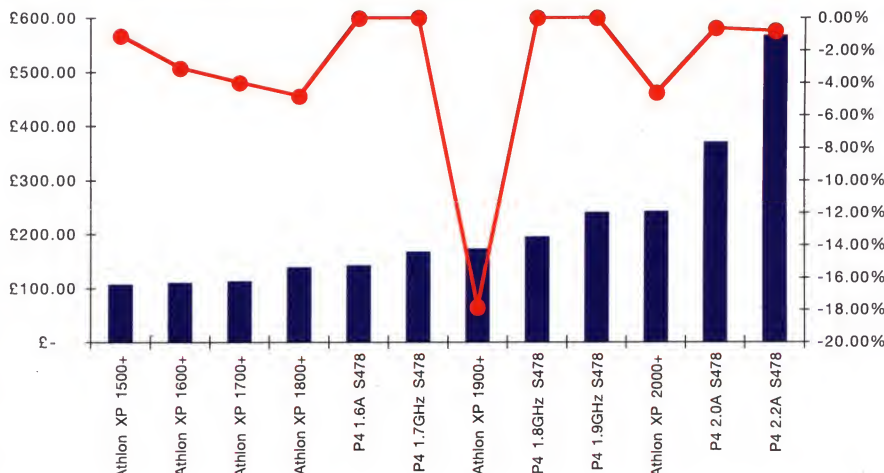
On the processor side, our sniffing seems to show that Intel processors have stayed at much the same price while Athlon XP has continued to enjoy modest cuts. If you look at the graph, you can see the curve of processor prices, heavily weighted in AMD's favour, and the line overlaid on top shows the percentage each processor has fallen by this month. The Athlon XP1900+ has dropped markedly in price from over £210 to less than £175, a drop of nearly 18 per cent.

Creative buys 3DLabs

The home giant teams up with the high-end graphics boys. What could it all mean?

ANY TECHOIDS out there remember Permedia 2? Creative Labs first teamed up with 3DLabs in 1995 when it launched the games market's first ever 3D accelerator, the Graphics Blaster Exxtreme, based on the aforementioned chipset. Though its products were technically ground-breaking, 3DLabs swiftly drew back from the bloodbath that the early 3D market represented and concentrated on the high-end rendering market, which the company leads comfortably.

Creative Labs' purchase could be big news for gamers as plans include "an anticipated re-entry into the volume desktop graphics market". Currently, 3DLabs boards are fearsomely expensive: its flagship cards – the Wildcat series – have up to 416Mb of memory on board and will set you back several thousand dollars. Not likely to appear in your average gaming PC, then. But insiders reckon that Creative plans to decrease

its reliance on other chipset manufacturers, which includes an aggressive move into the games market with a new range of 3D cards at comparatively pocket money prices.

3DLabs' intimate knowledge of OpenGL (used widely by various game engines including that of *Quake III Arena*) is likely to stand it in good stead when it comes to designing low-end boards. It is also an active member

of the consortium currently working on the OpenGL 2.0 specification.

All of this spells extremely good news for you, not least of which is the healthy competition which could turn into a three-horse race between Creative, ATI and NVIDIA. More news when we get it.
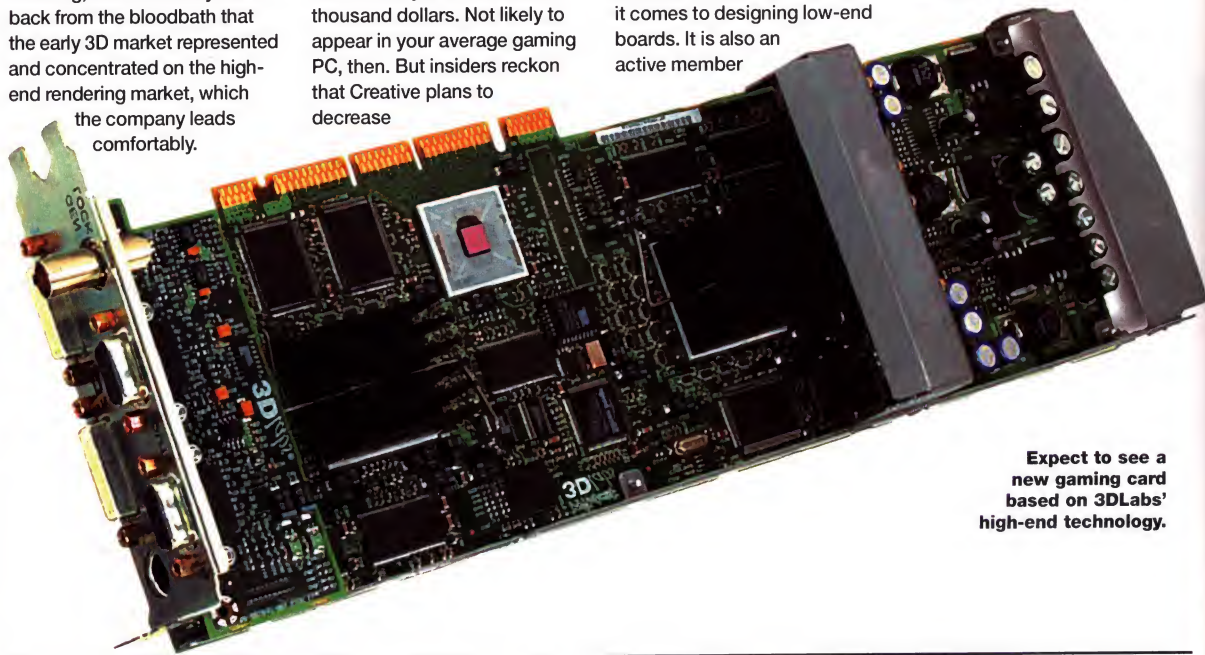
Expect to see a new gaming card based on 3DLabs' high-end technology.

Faster Radeons and new chipsets on the way

ATI is not content to bask in the glory of the 8500

ATI IS TO announce a pumped-up Radeon at the German techie show CeBIT 2002, according to rock solid rumours that are circulating in the gaming world. We can exclusively speculate that the card will be named the Radeon 8500XT and will be based upon the existing Radeon 8500 core, clocked at 300MHz and married to 128Mb memory, clocked at 600MHz DDR.

Many observers were expecting the next incarnation of Radeon, codenamed RV250, to be launched at the show. This part is considered an effective competitor to NVIDIA's GeForce 4 Titanium range, the fastest of which is clearly well ahead of ATI in the performance stakes at present

(as you can see from our round-up over the page). While this card is likely to surface before long, punters will for the time being at least have to make do with a go-faster 8500. If the pricing is right, this is no bad thing as current-generation Radeons have a great deal going for them, not least of which is their excellent price/performance ratio – especially running DirectX as opposed to OpenGL games. *PC ZONE* approves.

We can also reveal that ATI is to announce its long-awaited motherboard chipsets for Athlon and Pentium 4 following on the back of success from NVIDIA and it's nForce chipset. Watch this space for further news as it breaks.
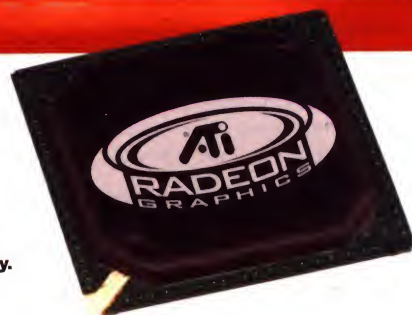
Expect new Radeons shortly.

《WELCOME》 TO MY MULTIPLAYER WORLD

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3

Tony like you've never seen him before.

Skate with up to seven friends in all new online play.

All new flatland tricks like Caspers, the Primo, and the Handstand Manual.

PC Screens

The legacy of Tony Hawk lives on in Tony Hawk's Pro Skater™ 3. Players perform hundreds of tricks and combos with an intuitive and solid control scheme in a variety of incredibly realistic, obstacle-filled locations and intelligent traffic. For the ultimate in skateboarding fun there are expanded multiplayer modes and a robust skate park editor for increased re-playability. Exclusive to the PC version is four new multiplayer maps, new team-based multiplayer games, up-to-eight-players online play, and the highest quality graphics ever to come to the franchise.

PC CD ROM

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360 INDY NOSEBONE
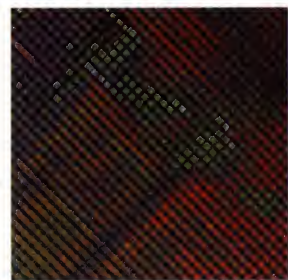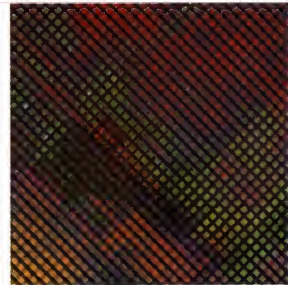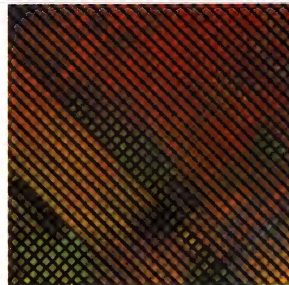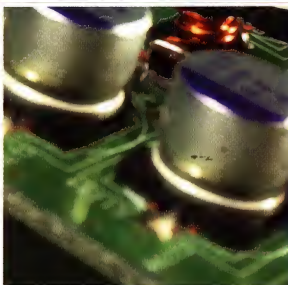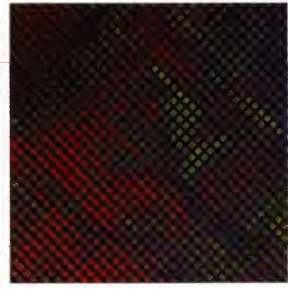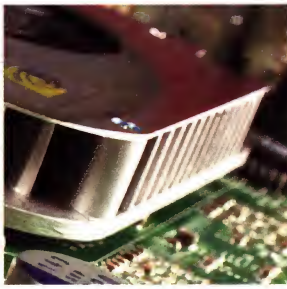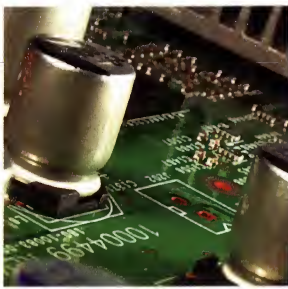
ROUND-UP: GRAPHICS CARDS

The long-awaited shoot-out has finally arrived: GeForce 3 and GeForce 4 versus Radeon 8500... *Tim Ponting* **gets techie on your ass**
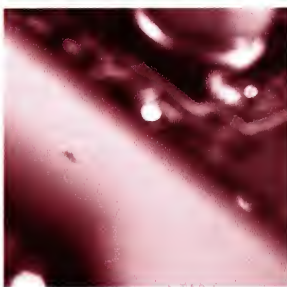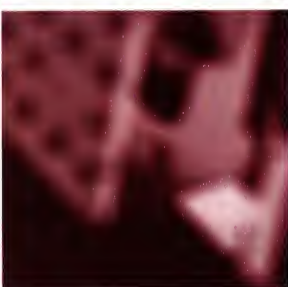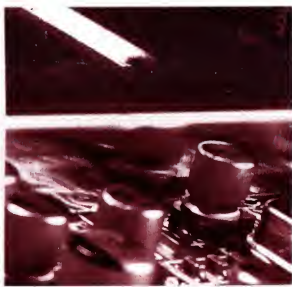
It's taken a while to get our hands on a card featuring the Radeon 8500 GPU, and all of a sudden two have come along at once: the standard 8500 from ATI, and Hercules' new 3D Prophet FDX AIW 8500 DV, complete with TV tuner and video capture functionality. And not only that, but we also have two brand new GeForce 4 boards to test. One is a superfast Titanium 4600 and the other a more modest MX440. And just to put them all in context, we've benchmarked them against our trusty GeForce 3 cards – the Hercules 3D Prophet III Ti500 and Ti200 cards.

Only five of these six boards are 'true' DirectX 8 parts complete with Pixel and Vertex Shaders. The GeForce 4 MX440, on the other hand is basically a heavily revised GeForce 2 and has no shaders, though it has many other elements in common with GeForce 4, most notably the improvements made to memory architecture. For the full technical lowdown on GeForce 4, pull out last month's issue as it covers the whole subject in more detail.

ATI RADEON 8500

■ Manufacturer: ATI | Street Price: £223, inc VAT | Phone: N/A | www.ati.com/uk

We've waited so long for this board we'd begun to think that ATI had something to hide. However, despite early driver issues, it's pretty clear now we've had time to play with it that this particular card shouldn't hide its light under a bushel.

So what wizardry does Radeon 8500 bring to the party? For starters, it's a DirectX 8 generation card, complete with ATI's own Vertex and Pixel Shader engine. We won't go into detail about the benefits of this here, as we've covered shaders extensively in last month's GeForce 4 preview. Suffice to say the Radeon 8500 is right up with GeForce 3 in this respect, though it lags behind GeForce 4 Titanium cards. Its Pixel Shader functionality, on the other hand, is marginally more sophisticated than that of GeForce 3 or 4, though it'll be a long while before games utilise any of these features.

In addition, the 8500 has an updated hardware transform and lighting engine – most games aren't using pixel and vertex shaders as yet, so the performance of this alternative pipeline is vital. The original Charisma Engine of Radeon has become Charisma Engine II in the 8500 – yes, you've guessed, it's faster than the old one.

IMPROVEMENTZ
Just as NVIDIA has concentrated on improving the efficiency of its memory architecture, so too has ATI. The 8500 divides the 128-bit memory interface into two 64-bit chunks. This isn't as sophisticated as the NVIDIA Crossbar Memory Controller which uses even smaller 32-bit blocks, but offers the same benefit: allowing smaller triangles to be transferred across the interface without wasting bandwidth. Radeon's HyperZ system becomes HyperZ II. This consists of 'HierarchicalZ' (which basically reduces the amount of overdraw
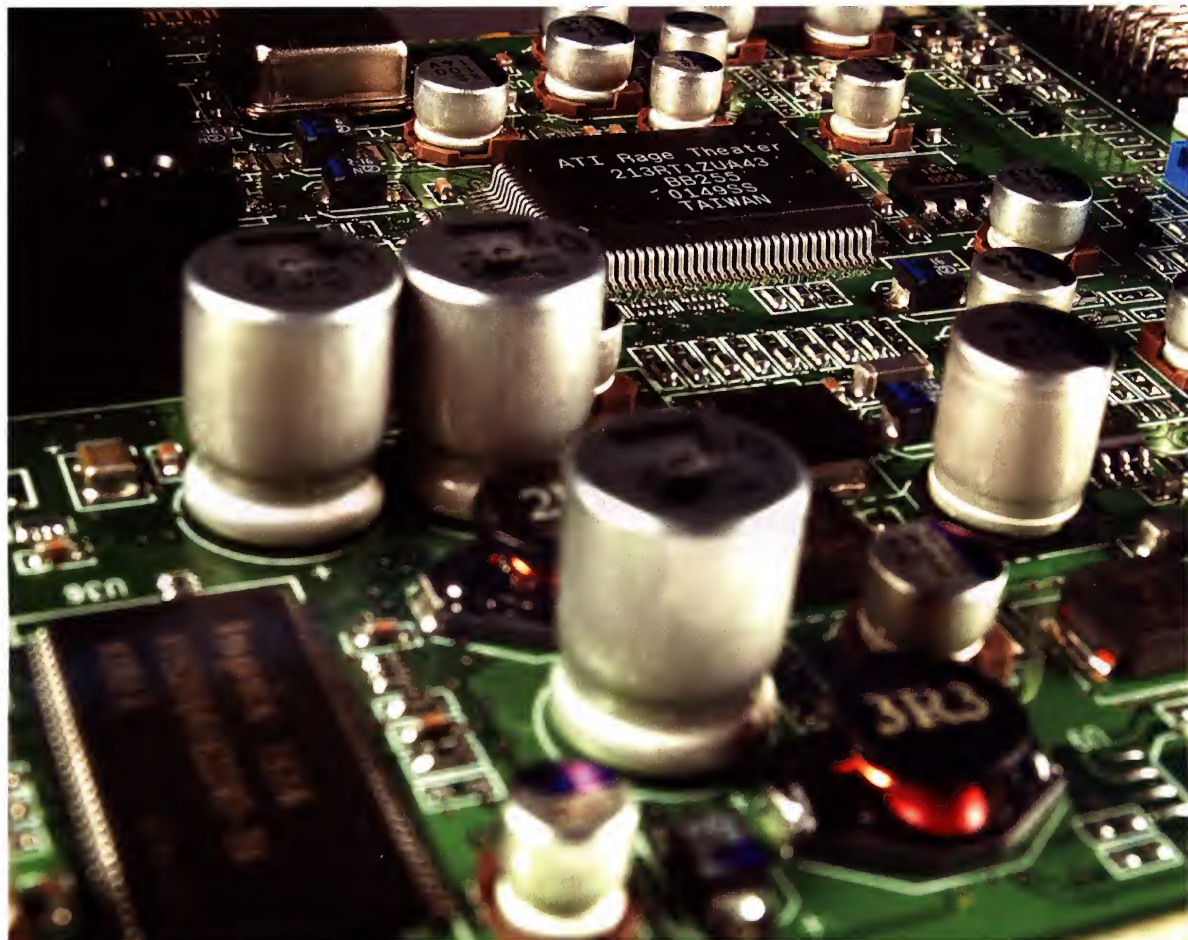
Now we've seen one for ourselves, we can officially confirm the 8500 is a strong card.

by consulting the Z-buffer to see if a pixel is visible before it's rendered), 'Z-Compression' (which reduces the amount of memory used to store the Z-buffer data and thus conserves bandwidth when it's accessed), and finally 'Fast Z-Clear' (which uses clever techniques to speed up the emptying of the Z-buffer after a scene has been rendered).

JAGLESS
So far, so similar to GeForce 3, but Radeon 8500 has a few more tricks up its sleeve… Smoothvision is ATI-speak for its new FSAA system – reducing jaggies in other words. It seems to be working well now, though it was completely disabled in earlier drivers.

Truform is an ATI technology that creates additional polygons within the GPU itself from a simpler polygonal model sent to the card. The result is that more rounded 3D objects can be created with minimal loss of performance. A few Truform patches are floating around for games such as *Counter-Strike*, and *Quake II*, and there are a handful of recent games that incorporate Truform in the core game. Basically, character models tend to look slightly better, especially close up.

DIRECT SPEED
The basic Radeon 8500 has a core clockspeed of 275MHz and

DDR RAM running at 550MHz. This compares with its closest equivalent from NVIDIA, the GF3 Ti500 which runs at 240MHz and 500MHz respectively. The faster memory in particular you would expect to convey a benefit, and certainly under DirectX this seems to be the case. The 3D Mark 2001 benchmark shows Radeon 8500 comfortably ahead of the Ti500 across the board, though it's not quite as clear-cut under 4x FSAA, where the Ti500 is faster at 1024x768 but slower at 800x600. However, it's a different story under OpenGL in *Wolfenstein*; the Ti500 and in many cases the lowly Ti200 were well ahead of Radeon. This seems likely to be a driver-related issue, but is still an indication that NVIDIA rules the OpenGL roost.

The drivers we tested were perfectly stable in a variety of games, though sometimes a little wayward at 1600x1200, so it looks like the problems that dogged Radeon 8500 owners at launch have now pretty much been cleared up.

"The original Charisma Engine of Radeon has become Charisma Engine II in the 8500 – yes, you've guessed, it's faster than the old one"

3D PROPHET FDX AIW 8500DV

■ **Manufacturer: Hercules | Street Price: £325, inc VAT | Phone: (020) 8686 5600 | www.hercules-uk.com**

Quite a mouthful, but somehow fitting for a board that manages to cram more features per square inch than any other we've ever seen.

First things first – Radeon 8500DV boards are not the same speed as Radeon 8500. They have a core clockspeed of 230MHz, with the memory clocked at just 380MHz DDR – this compares with 275MHz and 550MHz respectively for the bare 8500 board. As a result, you'll notice that its performance in 3D games is substantially behind that of the vanilla 8500, especially as memory bandwidth is stressed at higher resolutions and with FSAA switched on. This is somewhat disappointing in a card selling for over £300 (according to ATI specifying faster memory and core would have added even more to the cost), but then again that's not why you're buying it. Oh no. You're buying it because it's about as 'multimeeja' as it gets, while giving decent 3D performance.

TV ON DEMAND
The 8500DV is positively bristling with functionality. For starters, there's a fully spec-ed stereo TV tuner on board, compatible with UK analogue terrestrial and cable. The picture quality is excellent and the software front end is extremely configurable. The digital VCR function will record both MPEG-1 (VideoCD) and MPEG-2 with varying quality. In Best Quality mode, capture is at full PAL resolution, recording the de-interlaced signal at a resolution of 720x576 with CD quality audio. Results are superb, but it does tend to hoover hard drive space – you'll need close on 3.5Gb of disk space per hour of recording. You can also

'pause' live TV if you activate the option to record a constant buffer in the background.

The coaxial cable socket is on the spine of the card, alongside the DVI output, a large multi-way connector that links to a complex box with various A/V connections, plus a FireWire socket. This is great for users of digital video cameras, as you can pump recordings directly to your PC via FireWire.

SPLITSCREEN
The cable that leads to the breakout box has connections to link the video card to your soundcard input and output – otherwise you'll hear no sound from the TV tuner or the audio inputs and outputs on the breakout box itself.

This has connections for S-Video, Composite Video and stereo audio, all both input and output. In addition, there's an S/P-DIF output that can pass a multi-channel DVD audio signal to a suitable decoder, and a second FireWire port.

"You're buying it because it's about as 'multimeeja' as it gets, while giving decent 3D performance"

What does all this socketry allow you to achieve? You can output to a TV, and this can be done at the same time as using your monitor, and you can split a virtual desktop between your PC and TV if you want to. Multimonitor support is only a feature of GeForce 4 and a few old GeForce 2 MX cards, so this is another key benefit of Radeon 8500 over GeForce 3.

You can also use the breakout box connections to capture any Composite or S-Video source, though bear in mind Macrovision copy protection measures may render this unworkable depending on your source.

FAIR GAME
On the gaming side, the 8500DV has all the same features and functionality as the vanilla 8500 board – it's just a fair

bit slower unfortunately. In 3D Mark 2001 DirectX test suite, its results sit squarely between the GF3 Ti200 and Ti500, though under OpenGL in the *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* benchmark, it seemed less comfortable, dropping below the Ti200. However, it's still a full DirectX 8.1 card and is fast enough for all but the most demanding of gamers, especially if you're not bothered about running games at resolutions above 1024by768 or with FSAA enabled.

If you're in the market for a card that has the extra features this offers, you can't go far wrong with Hercules' 8500DV, even if the price seems a tad steep. Fortunately, you get what you pay for. However, if it's out-and-out games performance you're after, this isn't the card for you.
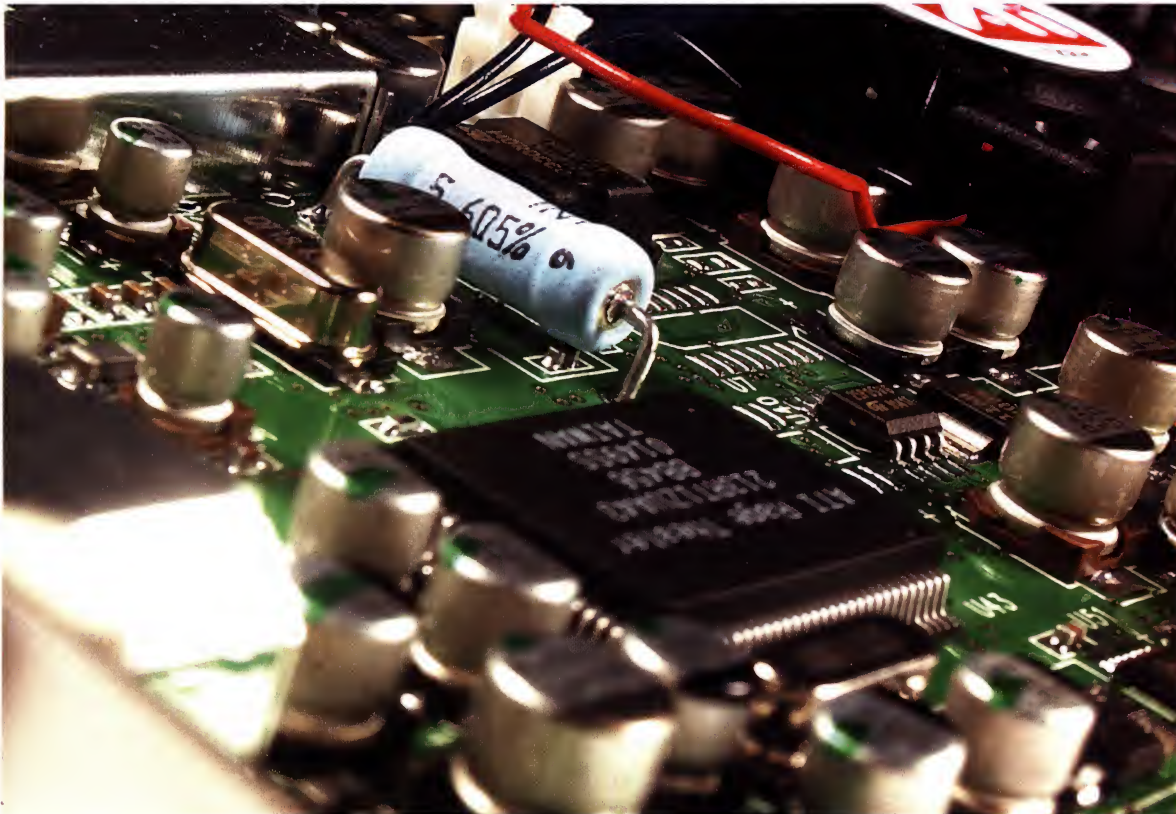
Take an 8500 and add loads of multimedia functionality and you've got the Hercules DV.

SPARKLE GEFORCE 4 MX440

■ Manufacturer: Sparkle | Street Price: £105, inc VAT | Phone: (0191) 482 6656 | www.sparkle-technology.co.uk

If there's been any criticism levied at NVIDIA after the launch of GeForce 4, it's been that the new MX series cards should never have been called GeForce 4s in the first place. This is because they basically have more in common with GeForce 2 cards than GeForce 3 or 4. However it is a completely new chip design that powers the GeForce 4 MX cards, with several substantial improvements to the original GeForce 2 design that it shares with the 'proper' GeForce 4 Titanium boards.

So what is a GeForce 4 MX? Sadly, one thing it isn't is a DirectX 8 card; it has no Vertex or Pixel Shader engine unlike the GeForce 3 or GeForce 4s. However, it does, of course, have a hardware transform and lighting engine on the GPU itself, which, to be quite honest, is as far as many current-generation games have got. As a completely new chip design manufactured using a 0.15 micron process, NVIDIA has been able to increase the core clockspeed considerably higher than the old GeForce 2 MX; this card has a core clocked at 270MHz and memory at 400MHz DDR, compared with 200MHz and 166MHz respectively for the old GeForce 2 MX400.

BACKMARKER
NVIDIA has also seen fit to include most of the other enhancements that have elevated GeForce 4 above GeForce 3. These were covered in detail in the GeForce 4 preview feature last issue and we haven't room to go into them all again, but it is worth mentioning that all GeForce 4 cards support multiple displays. As has been pointed out, there will be few games that make use of this feature, as twice the image area to fill means half the frame-rate for 3D applications, although ATI claims multi-monitor support
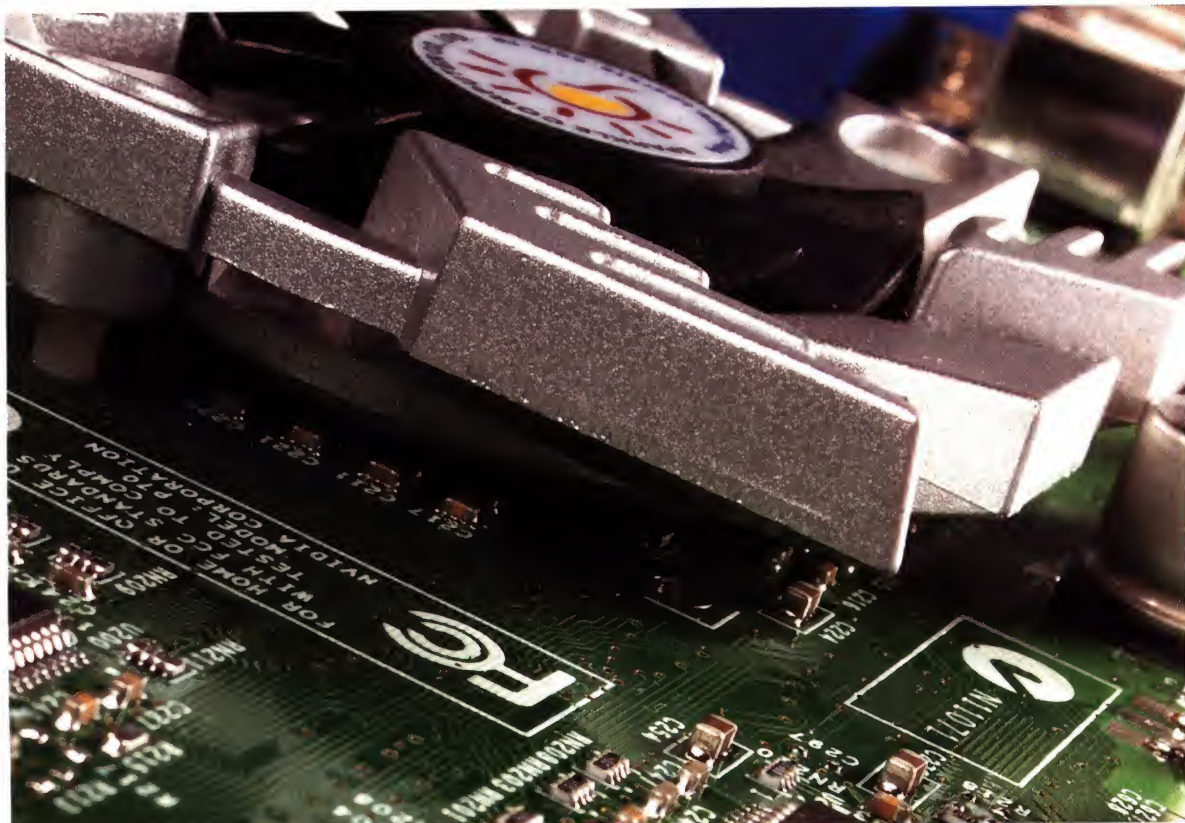
Don't be fooled into thinking you're getting a true GeForce 4 card for £100.

within *Star Trek: Armada II* and *Serious Sam* among others, so it would seem likely more will come now NVIDIA is onboard.

And so on to the performance – and it's clear straight away that this is a budget board that delivers budget performance. In the 3D Mark 2001 DirectX test suite, the GeForce 4 MX440 brought up the rear across the board. Although we didn't include any low-end competitors of the MX440 here, it's clearly faster than the GeForce 2 Titanium and all previous GeForce 2 MXs, and right in there scrapping with ATI's Radeon 7500. We'll have a full low-end 3D card round-up real soon folks.

CHEAP
Anyhow, to the figures. In Car Chase, Dragothic and Lobby,

the card hit between 90 and 100 frames per second in low detail at 1024x768 with Pure hardware T&L enabled – a pretty good achievement considering it's a card with a street price of around £105. In high detail, the MX440 begins to struggle at frame-rates of around 40 to 50 fps.

With 2x FSAA enabled at 1024x768, frame-rates plummeted to 50-60 fps for the low detail and a meagre 30-odd fps for high detail. The situation was even more marked with 4x FSAA, running in low detail at just 25 to 30 fps. While NVIDIA is justifiably pushing GeForce 4 as the card that makes high-quality FSAA at high resolutions possible, it's certainly not the MX440 that can deliver on this.

CHEERFUL
Moving on to *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* and OpenGL, the MX440 actually overtakes the Radeon 8500DV both without anti-aliasing and with 2x FSAA, only being pipped by the 8500DV with 4x FSAA enabled.

Considering the price of the card, this is an impressive result. If you're happy playing *RTCW* at 800x600 with 2x FSAA, you'll get over 60fps as long as your CPU can handle it – *RTCW* seems to be quite a processor hog.

We reckon the budget end of the market is going to get hot again pretty soon, so it's difficult to say whether MX440 is going to be king of this niche for long. Now an increasing number of games are arriving that support hardware T&L, NVIDIA processors are looking more attractive and Kyro 2 less so. But undoubtedly MX440 has raised the stakes again…

"It's clear that this is a budget board that delivers budget performance"

VISIONTEK XSTASY GEFORCE 4 TI4600

■ Manufacturer: VisionTek | Street Price: £362, inc VAT | Phone: N/A | www.visiontek.com/uk

The GeForce 4 Titanium cards are what you call 'proper' incarnations of GeForce 4, supporting all the DirectX 8 features of GeForce 3 with its Vertex and Pixel Shader engine, known in NVIDIA speak as 'nFinite FX II'. We'd refer you back to the GeForce 4 preview last issue for more information, but here's a quick refresher. The beauty of both NVIDIA and ATI's engines are that the Vertex and Pixel Shaders are programmable. Developers can write simple routines that are carried out by the GPU itself which allows, for example, animals to look like they're breathing, or trees to have leaves that sway in the wind. Similarly, the Pixel Shader engine allows developers to program special routines to manipulate the light, shade or colour of each individual pixel on screen, giving rise to the complex lighting and real-time shadowing effects. Realistic surface textures such as hair can be conveyed, as well as more convincing environmental bump mapping effects.

TWIN-SHADY

So where has NVIDIA taken nFinite FX II in GeForce 4? Most significantly, GF4 now has two Vertex Shaders as opposed to GeForce 3's single Shader. This is in common with the GPU used by Xbox. NVIDIA has also tightened up the performance of the Pixel Shader. Of course, this technology is of little use in most games on sale today, as they don't embrace these features of DirectX 8. What is highly important is excellent performance in games that use fixed function hardware transform and lighting, and GeForce 4 Titanium 4600 delivers on this front in spades.

The Titanium 4600 has a core clockspeed of 300MHz with memory clocked at 650MHz DDR, making it the fastest GPU on the market in raw terms.
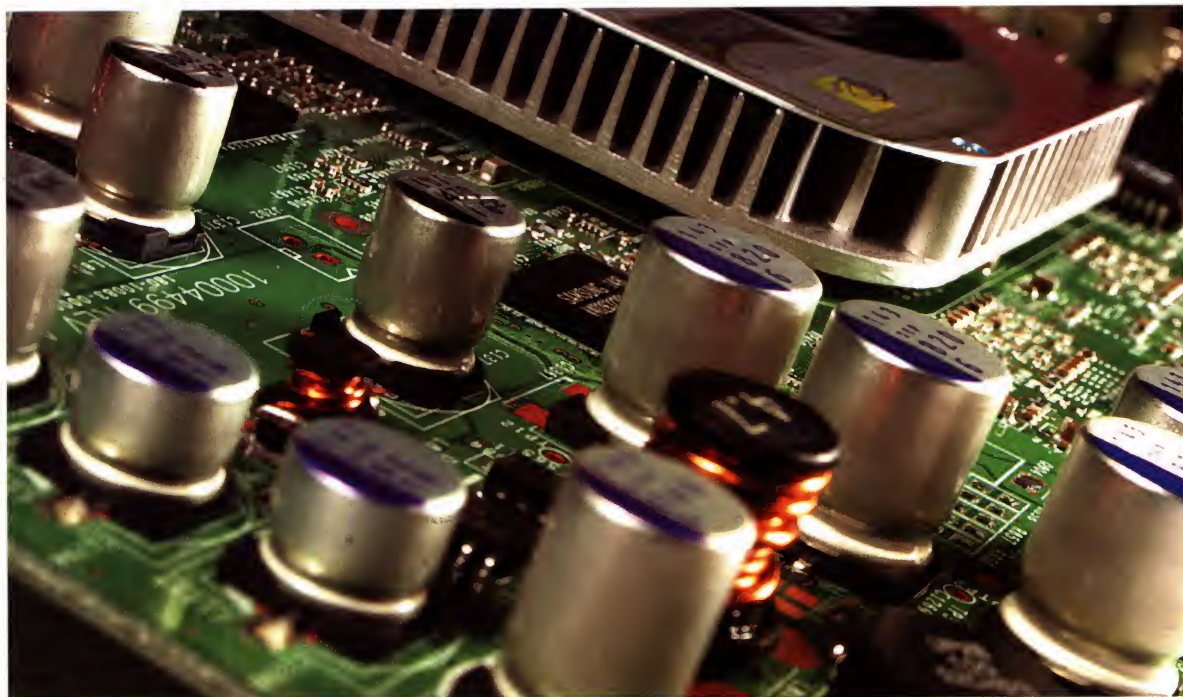
It may well be expensive, but if performance is what you're looking for this is your card.

How does this translate into benchmarks?

SIMPLY THE BEST

Clearly, this card massively outperforms any competing card on the market across the board. Under 3D Mark 2001 at a resolution of 800x600, the card comfortably punched through the 10,000 point barrier. With anti-aliasing switched off, it barely breaks a sweat even at 1600x1400. In high-detail mode, frame-rates in the three primary game tests run at between 45 and 115 frames per second, all perfectly acceptable. What is crucial, however, is the benchmark test that hits real-time shading. This is what next-gen games are going to be pushing, and laudably, the Titanium 4600 manages the benchmark at just under 50fps in 1024x768. When you consider the fastest GeForce 3 GPU, the Ti500, could only manage 27fps in the same test, you can see

the improvements that have been made here. On the other hand, however, Radeon 8500 manages to render the same scene at 44fps, suggesting that its first bash at a Vextex and Pixel Shader engine is closer in performance to GeForce 4 than GeForce 3, though at higher resolutions the vastly superior bandwidth of the Titanium 4600 leaves Radeon behind.

DOUBLE THE POWER

The *Wolfenstein* benchmarks tell a similar story – you can see the frame-rates yourself from the graphs. The CPU is the bottleneck until you hit 1280x1024. By the time you hit 1600x1400, the GeForce 4 Ti4600 is twice as fast as its nearest competitor – that's impressive.

However, it's with FSAA enabled that NVIDIA is keen to promote GeForce 4's performance and the 4600 simply flies. With 2x FSAA

enabled, you can run the low-detail Car Chase demo at more than 60fps at 1600x1400 – most cards won't even perform anti-aliasing at this resolution. However, it's with 4x FSAA enabled that you really see the improvement in image quality. At 1024x768, the three main game demos run well in low-detail mode, though in high-detail, frame-rates drop towards 30fps. This is the absolute minimum for practical gaming – ideally, you want to stay above the 60fps mark. *Wolfenstein* benchmarks, however, are very encouraging, suggesting that in 'real-world' current generation games 4x FSAA is a goer. At the crucial resolution of 1024x768 it still gets in excess of 70fps with 4x FSAA active. At that level, Radeon 8500 drops to around 23fps. And with its highest quality engaged, it's less than 16fps – unplayable in other words.

If you have the money, the GeForce 4 Titanium 4600 is the fastest card you can buy. Raid the piggy bank, curse the fact you've just bought a Ti500 – but submit to the power of GeForce 4.

PCZONE VERDICT

✔ The fastest card money can buy
✔ Flies in all the benchmarks
✘ Doesn't come cheap

93

The Rolls Royce of the graphics card world

"If you have the spondulies, the GeForce 4 Titanium 4600 is the fastest 3D gaming card money can buy"

ON THE ZONE BENCH OF DOOM

We've completely overhauled our benchmarking procedure to take account of the brand new cards. Out goes Windows 98SE; welcome to the world of Windows XP. Not only that, we've also dumped the ancient and increasingly meaningless *Quake III Arena* tests in favour of a custom *RTCW*

benchmark – a current-generation title using the same engine but with up-to-date demands on your 3D card under OpenGL. The results we get reflect performance in today's games.

We tested the cards in a freshly prepared machine carrying an Intel D845BG motherboard fitted with a

2.2GHz Intel Pentium 4 processor and 256Mb Crucial PC2100 DDR RAM. Windows XP Home was the operating system employed. NVIDIA cards were all tested with Detonator XP driver version 27.20; the Radeons with driver version 6.13.10.6015, the latest officially supported software. 3D Mark 2001

tests were all carried out with 32-bit colours and textures, 24-bit Z-buffer, texture compression and using the Pure Hardware T&L setting. *Wolfenstein* was run in full 32-bit glory, with all detail options cranked up to the max, with the exception of anisotropic filtering. So now you know.

3D MARK 2001 NO FSAA
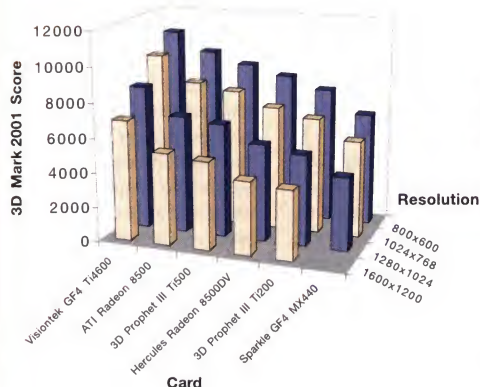
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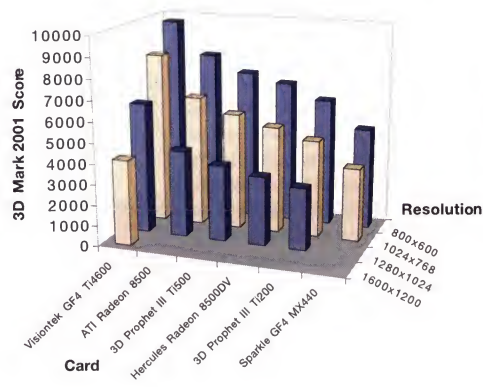
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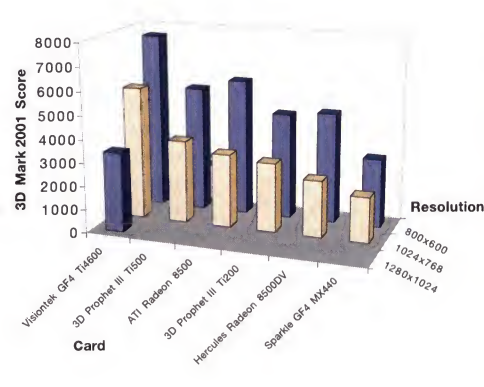
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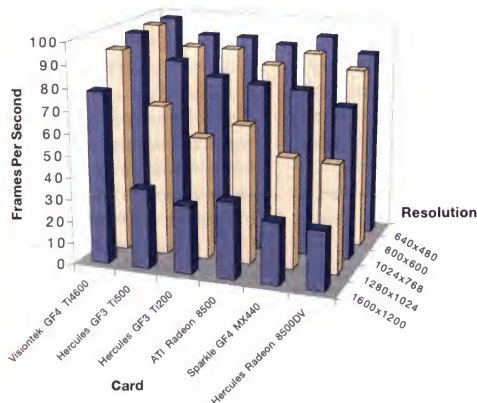
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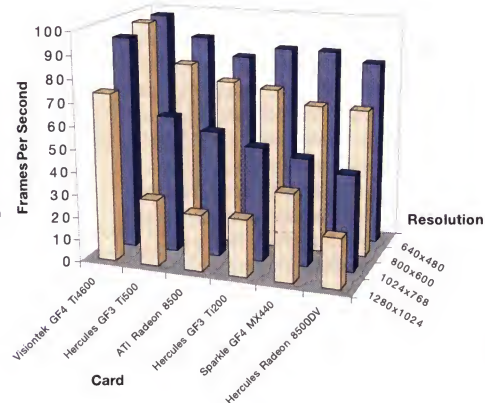
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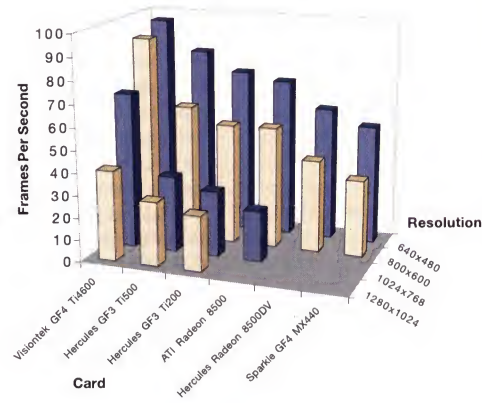
GLOSSARY

Bump Mapping A lighting and texturing technique that gives the surface of objects a more three-dimensional feel without adding to their geometric complexity. For example, to generate walls with bumpy or uneven surfaces.

Core Clockspeed The speed at which the GPU cycles per second. The faster it goes, the more instructions can be processed in a given time.

DDR (Double Data Rate) Memory that supports data transfer on the rising and falling edge of each clock cycle, effectively doubling its performance.

FSAA (Full Screen Anti-Aliasing) A technique used to reduce jagged edges in pixel-based images by blending the colours of adjacent pixels.

GPU (Graphics Processing Unit) Similar to the main CPU in your system but on the graphics card, and dedicated to generating 3D images.

Hardware Transform and Lighting In the bad old days, all polys had to be set up and lit by your PC's processor. Hardware transform and lighting means the basic tasks involved in calculating the geometry and lighting conditions for polygons is carried out on the GPU.

IEEE1394 Also known as FireWire, this is a high-speed data transfer interface that can be used for networking or connecting peripherals to a PC.

Memory Clockspeed The speed at which the memory can be accessed. This is vital for higher resolutions and colour depths.

MPEG (Motion Picture Experts Group) A bunch of clever bods who have produced a set of compression systems for digital video.

OpenGL A 3D graphics language originally written by Silicon Graphics Incorporated for offline rendering, but adopted by several games engines, most notably the *Quake* series.

Overdraw When a 3D scene is set up by the GPU, certain objects will be behind others and therefore invisible. If you calculate every pixel whether it's visible or not, you get 'overdraw' (calculating two or three pixels unnecessarily before selecting the one in front and sending it to the screen).

Pixel Shaders A programmable system developers can use to improve

the quality of lighting and texturing effects on a per-pixel basis. For example, to give realistic hair or more accurate bump mapping.

RAMDAC (Random Access Memory Digital-to-Analog Converter) The thing that converts the digital image information into an analogue signal to send to the monitor.

Vertex Shaders A 3D engine that developers can program to produce real-time deformation of objects with code on the GPU itself, such as breathing animals or faces that wrinkle when they smile.

Z-Buffer An area of memory on a graphics card that is used to store the depth information of a pixel, ie the Z as opposed to the X or Y axes.

DEAR WANDY

If your Windows world is full of woe, write to *Wandy*, he's the man to show you how to make it all better

■ **DR JEKYLL** Phil Wand

"Now I don't know if it's me expecting too much, but in games such as Ghost Recon I get a stunning slide show of one frame every decade"

MEDDLE OF HONOR

Q After installing the *Medal Of Honor* demo off your cover disc, I accidentally deleted the game folder. I tried to reinstall, but the installer doesn't work if the system thinks the game is still there. If I try to uninstall the game, I can't because the uninstall files are no longer around. Basically, the game is in the registry so it's impossible for me to remove. This problem causes my PC to freeze sometimes, which really annoys me. Help please.
Weimond

A A visit to the registry is nothing to be afraid of, but if you're on a mission to delete things, as we are right here, go carefully. You won't be asked for confirmation before removing something critical and you won't be able to undo it afterwards. Typically, you won't feel the seismic tremors of silly mistakes until after you've forgotten what you actually did. With that in mind, let's continue. First, fire up the Registry Editor by pressing the Start button, selecting Run and typing regedit into the box. Once the program has appeared, browse to HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\2015. Highlight and delete it. This is the key used

by the game's developer, 2015. If you have to burgle the registry again for other programs, bear in mind that many entries refer not to the title of the program but to the people behind it. OK, now browse to HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\EA GAMES and look for the subfolder entitled Medal Of Honor Allied Assault Multiplayer Demo. Highlight and delete it. Lastly, we need to remove the uninstall information. Browse to HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Uninstall and press F3 to bring up the Find dialog. Type Medal Of Honor and press Find. Most likely it'll settle upon a weird-looking entry with seemingly random letters and numbers enclosed in curly quotes. That's the InstallShield entry for your game. Highlight the folder in the left pane and press delete. You should now be free to install the game.

DUAL MISERY

Q I have Dual PIII 1GHz CPUs, 1GB RAM, a GeForce2 MX Pro with 64Mb DDR and a Sound Blaster Live. My main drive is an 18GB SCSI with a 10GB IDE drive as

back-up. I have all the latest DirectX8 certified drivers for all hardware. Now, I don't know if it's me expecting too much from my rig, but in games such as *Ghost Recon* on a screen resolution of, say, 1280 x 1024 in 32-bit mode with all the stops pulled out, I get a stunning slide show of about one frame every decade. I can't believe how dramatically the frame-rate leaps to fluid silk when you change it back to 16-bit and tone down on the goodies. Now, I can't help feeling that with dual PIII 1GHz processors and a gigabyte of 133MHz RAM it should wolf down anything you throw at it. I do understand the concept of bus speeds and data bandwidth and bottlenecks, but with two CPUs, surely the burden the graphics card has to bear would be lighter than if it

Dual PIIIs are nothing to get excited about. Some high-end servers come configured with four.

were only one? I have always dreamt of owning a machine like this but I don't get the feeling I'm wringing every ounce of power from it. Please bless me with your pearls of wisdom, oh sage.
Allan

A It's a pity you don't go into a little more detail regarding your motherboard and processor, because Intel's own documentation on the FC-PGA Pentium III E-series CPU states clearly that said chip will not work in SMP

(symmetric multiprocessing) configuration. Although I've seen people get them up and running with modifications, it's beyond the scope of this article to talk you through them, and there's a chance it's all bollocks anyway. It goes to show once again why I recommend single processors for people who play games. First and foremost, Windows 95/98/ME ignores the second chip, and most queries I receive and come from people with these operating systems. Second, there are very few titles that take advantage of SMP and yes, I know, *Quake III* is one of them, but the performance gains just aren't worth the outlay. And last but not least, in almost all circumstances the graphics card is the bottleneck, not the engine behind it. When you run *Ghost Recon* in ball-breaking mode you're actually thrashing a single 1GHz PIII with an old-model GeForce – hence the flick-book frame-rate. All things considered, the extravagant monster you have would be ideal for a 3D artist wanting to cut back on his rendering times, but for gaming it ranks just above average. In future save your money and aim for a single, whopper processor, 256Mb RAM and the biggest, baddest video card you can lay your hands on.

MEASURING UP

Q About two months ago, I bought an AMD Athlon XP 1600+ with a GeForce 2 MX200, 256MB RAM, and a 40GB hard drive. Despite trawling the Net I can't get a definitive answer about how my PC stacks up against Intel's 1.6GHz P4. So my questions are this: how much better is my machine compared

WANDY'S TOP TIP

SUPER START MENU

Admit it, you hate your Start Menu. It's disorganised, and you spend too much time looking for stuff. With spring approaching, it's time you cleaned things up.

The easiest way to organise things is to right-click on the Start Button and choose Explore. This opens the folder containing all the shortcut icons which together form your computer's Start Menu. Click on the Programs folder, and you'll be able to move, copy and remove any Start Menu entry.

If you're using Windows ME, 2000 or XP, you can also arrange all the icons alphabetically, making everything easier on the eye. With the Start Menu expanded, right-click and click on Sort By Name. Admit it, you never knew that.

Each issue I'll divulge one of my top tips, unless you can do better. Send 'em to the address above, and if I think the tip is top enough I'll print it and send you £50.

to its Intel equivalent? Is my crappy GeForce 2 holding my Athlon back? Do I need a better video card? Is there a lot of difference between SDR and DDR? (I have SDR.) Finally, I've been told my K7S5A motherboard is 'crap' – is that right?

Anon

A AMD began renaming its chips with big numbers in a bid to catch the eye of gamers and speed freaks. The Athlon XP 2000+ operates at 1.67GHz, the 1900+ at 1.60GHz, the 1800+ at 1.533GHz, and the 1700+ at 1.47GHz. It's all part of something the **AMD marketing department calls True Performance Initiative,** but for most people it's just **needlessly confusing. Your chip operates at 1.40GHz and is the entry level model. That's not to say it's crap** – far from it. In all the benchmarks I've seen, the XP 1600+ level-pegs the Intel P4 1.8GHz and leaves the 1.6GHz trailing. On the subject of your graphics card, the GeForce 2 MX200 is a fine card for someone wanting performance without the cost, and unless you have fivers coming out of your behind don't worry about changing it. Every gamer wants the next card up and wants their games to be super-smooth, and if you went and bought a GeForce 3 you'd be writing in a month's time asking if you should upgrade to a GeForce 4. As for the difference between SDR and DDR, people will experience very different things depending on their set-up. Someone with an entry-level PC won't notice the difference; someone like you may gain 15fps here and there. Only you can decide if that's worth the outlay – for me it isn't. Lastly, your motherboard isn't 'crap'. Whoever told you this is full of it.

RADEON RAGE

Q I must sympathise with the comments of Mark Wilbraham as I too have had a nightmare with ATI Radeon 8500 drivers. Sure, there are beta drivers available now, but the demo of *Medal Of Honor* won't run with them. And for me it's been one problem after another – going from NVIDIA to ATI, I view my purchase as a waste of money and will revert back when I can afford it. As for your comments about Mark "doing his homework", he must have read the same reviews I did. *PC PRO* gave it a very good write-up, and *PC Format* can't say enough good things about it, giving it their Gold award in both the January and February issue. Nowhere in the reviews was I warned that the drivers are in essence experimental affairs, and how anyone can make a balanced decision is anyone's guess. The performance of the card is one thing, but if the drivers are not ready for the public then they really shouldn't be released. I tried to email ATI with my complaints but all I got back was an automated email.

Martin Tead

A In defence of ATI, the Radeon 8500 is a pretty **damn serious piece of hardware that rivals – and in some areas defeats – the almighty GeForce 3 Ti500. Many owners are more than chuffed with their purchases, and the card has gone a long way to restoring ATI's forgotten reputation as a**

If ATI drivers were real people, this is what they'd look like.

technology leader. However, as you explain in your message, many people have bumped into problems with the drivers, and as ATI drivers have been a real bugbear for me over the years, I feel nothing but frustration when I receive letters on the subject. Anyway, now you've made your purchase – and this goes for anyone else with a Radeon – my advice would be to stick with it. ATI has made a lot of promises about patching its drivers and you should find that some day soon the card will put the smile back on your face. Oh, and check out page 106 for news on how the 8500 stacks up against both the GeForce 3 and 4 in our massive round-up.

QUICK NETWORK

Q I've recently inherited several PCs by upgrading machines and keeping the leftover bits and pieces. Now I'm going to try and network them all for gaming. I'm reasonably computer literate, and have set up several systems, but never a

network. Can you give me any pointers? I've just purchased a five-way network switch hub which claims to be PNP as well as some crossover leads, but I have no idea how to configure these. Please help.

Leon

A You don't need crossover leads unless you're connecting two PCs directly, or are chaining two or more hubs together, and if you use these cables to connect your machines to the hub you'll get nowhere. What you need to do is to go and buy some straight through leads from any decent retailer and use them instead. After you're plumbed in, go to each copy of Windows, right-click on the Network Neighborhood icon, and choose Properties from the pop up menu. Ensure you install TCP/IP as a protocol on each (you may also want to add IPX/SPX if you want to play older titles like *Atomic Bomberman* or *Red Alert*) and also Client for Microsoft Networks as a client. Now you need to assign each of the network cards an address on your network. Use 192.168.0.1 for the first machine, 192.168.0.2 for the second, and so on, until each PC has been uniquely identified. These particular IPs are known as Private Network or Class-C addresses, and afford you up to 65,534 machines. If you're feeling flush (or just want to be a bit different) you might want to also use 10.0.0.1 right up to 10.255.255.254, affording a network of 16,777,214 different machines. After restarting them all, open a command prompt on your first box

Hubs for small home networks are inexpensive and easy to set up.

and type: ping 192.168.0.2. If you get a page of Reply packets, and there's no reason you shouldn't, you're sorted.

YOU ARE SICK

Q Help, you are my last hope. The problem is this: one day I switched on my computer and although everything started up normally, when I tried to launch a game by clicking on a shortcut I couldn't. Every time my mouse pointer went anywhere near an icon it ran off. It's the same for all shortcuts, and when I finally get into the games, everything runs very slowly. I've reinstalled my system from scratch, from motherboard drivers to graphics drivers but it's still the same. I suspected the graphics card was at fault, but after calling Creative I was told that they'd "never come across it before." Any ideas? Please? My system is an Asus A7V Athlon 1GHz with 512 RAM, a GeForce 2 GTS DDR, Sound Blaster 5.1 and Windows 98.

Andrew

A Andrew, you have a virus, most probably something like W32.Magistr.24876@mm. Along with a lot of damage, this little bastard causes all your icons to leap away from the mouse pointer whenever it approaches. Put simply, nothing else inside your system is going to make something this bizarre happen. No out-of-date drivers, no overheating CPU, nothing. I'm a little perturbed that Creative was rather dismissive of the problem, as incidences like this are not only common but tend to stand out. Have a look at securityresponse.symantec.com/avcenter and search either for the virus that I suggested – bear in mind that it could be one of any number of variants – or for the symptoms. Then you need to order yourself a copy of Norton Anti-Virus. Good luck. **PCZ**

WATCHDOG

"The stupid, dumb-a**, ****-witted motha******s!" Now, now, stop spitting nails and drop Watchdog a line instead so we can help you tackle those consumer woes...

■ **PLAYING IT STRAIGHT** Adam Phillips

UNMADE TO MEASURE

Q I just spent £340 getting a case, motherboard and other stuff from Dabs, but on arrival I found the motherboard didn't fit the case. I emailed asking for advice to make sure the replacement would fit, not wanting to have to return another case (at my cost). I was told via email: "All sales information needs to be located via our website."

Now, I looked at the case and motherboard manufacturer websites before choosing the original case and found nothing to suggest they wouldn't be compatible. So how does Dabs expect me to confirm that a replacement case will be? If they can't help me choose an appropriate case then I'll have to go elsewhere.

Ben Calder

A Managing director of Dabs, David Atherton, got back to us with this response: "Dabs took a business decision to change from being a telephone sales company to web sales only. We no longer have any consumer sales staff. All the information our sales staff used to offer is now on our site, with more than 15,000 full product descriptions, photographs and specifications. We also link to lots of other sites, including advice sites. We also have a database of more than 1,000 FAQs on our site."

He agrees that this forces customers to search out answers for themselves on the Web, rather than Dabs searching the Web on their behalf: "However, all surveys show people want lower prices above everything, and our sales have doubled since adopting this approach," said David.

In your case, David says that most of their PC cases have dimensions shown on the product spec page and if not, the case manufacturer's sites (to which they provide links) will show them. If you're still not confident then perhaps you should switch to an e-tailer who can actually offer advice over the phone.

SCAN-T SERVICE?

Q My brother bought a system from Scan but when it arrived the DVD-ROM didn't work so we sent it back via recorded delivery.

A number of days later, when the replacement drive had not arrived, I loaned my brother my old CD drive so that he could install some software. At this point the PC stopped working but I managed to trace the fault back to the processor.

My brother contacted Scan to ask for a replacement processor and after many telephone conversations, Scan eventually agreed to despatch a courier. When the courier arrived, he only had the DVD drive and collected the processor as Scan refused to send out a processor until the faulty one was tested. A few days later a replacement processor arrived.

Over the Christmas period, we attempted to re-install the components but the system remained highly unstable and it refused to boot into Windows.

Fortunately, I have a number of spare parts and managed to improve the stability of the system but not by much. My brother called Scan again and asked for a refund.

Scan refused but we were offered a credit note so that alternative items could be obtained. When this didn't arrive we phoned again to see what had happened but were informed the offer of a credit note had been withdrawn and that Scan now wanted my brother to send off the items so they could test the parts again.

As a 'goodwill' gesture, Scan has said we can bring the faulty parts to Bolton so that they can test the unit in front of us and repair any parts. Scan has kindly stated that it will not charge us for allowing us to come to them so that they can fulfil their obligations as the retailer...

Richard Hoy, on behalf of Matthew Hoy

A We sent off your complaint to Scan for their feedback: "Please note that the only issue was the faulty DVD-ROM drive for which a replacement was sent and the carriage credited to his account," offered a spokesperson for the company. "The other issues the customer claims are a result of improper installation and fault diagnostics."

According to Scan they replaced the processor as a goodwill gesture. As for the cancelled credit note, Scan says that the spokesperson wasn't aware of the full circumstances surrounding your case and once it had been discussed, the offer was retracted.

Instead, Scan says it has offered – on the condition that you send the parts back to them – to build the system free of charge and then resend it to you: "But to date, we are still waiting for the customer to send the parts back. We have tried on several occasions to communicate with the customer. However, we have not heard back from him."

As for the cost of sending back the system, Scan finally says that "should there be a genuine hardware fault, then we will credit the cost of carriage back to the customer in line with our terms."

Let us know how the situation is resolved, Richard.

BT CLOSED SHOP?

Q Watchdog received two complaints about BT openworld this month. The first was from Kevin West who has

"BT broadband service has a 12-month minimum contract which is made clear when customers sign up"

been on the receiving end of a staggering amount of cock-ups made by BT while trying to install his broadband service. Crashing ADSL, lines going dead, three months of "crap", hundreds of phone calls, three days off work... BT openworld told us: "There has clearly been a misunderstanding in this case and we apologise to Mr West. We have now connected his broadband service and made an offer of compensation."

Not such good news for Martin Brownings though when he had ADSL installed in his previous property and then moved to another house. He was hoping to take the ADSL contract along with him to his new home but... "I have now found out I am locked into a

Be prepared to do your homework if you're buying from Dabs.

SAINTS NOT SINNERS

EVEN A BLIND SQUIRREL FINDS AN ACORN ONCE IN A WHILE…

I recently bought a PC with Windows XP and found that some of my games didn't work with my Microsoft steering wheel or joystick. I phoned Microsoft up and was told that XP only supports products if they connect via USB. After a short chat I was told to send the old products back for shiny USB replacements. I'm sure this isn't their usual practice but it made my day.

Darrel Proctor

12-month contract at my previous address. My only option is to pay up the full year's contract on the last house and start again at the new one. So that's £400 to pay off the last one then another £70 for installation and the first month's fee up front. That's a £520 penalty for having a family that required a bigger house."

A Ouch. Here's what BT had to say: "BT openworld's broadband service has a 12-month minimum contract which is made clear when customers sign up."

But is there anything we can do for Martin and his house move? "There is also investment in ADSL equipment to provide the service and some of the costs incurred in delivering it to the individual customer's premises are recovered over the 12-month period. We are therefore unable to terminate the contract within 12 months."

Sorry, Martin, looks like you'll have to go back to your modem. We think that it's pretty harsh that no compromise can be reached. Other readers please take note of Martin's unfortunate situation. And read that small print…

SIMPLY MAD
The following letter to Simply Computers has been forwarded to Watchdog.

Q I have never experienced such poor quality customer service in all my life. Also, your technical support staff are not professionals. Neither are they properly trained in computers.

After failing to get through to anyone who could properly help with my £3,000 PC and its problems, I managed to get hold of another one of your technical support staff. I told him that I thought the problem was to do with the soundcard drivers. He told me that he would send me more up-to-date drivers. I told him to make sure that he didn't waste my time by sending me the same drivers that came with the

soundcard. After six days, I was sent the same drivers…

I then spoke to another member of your staff who said the previous person should have known that the technical support team doesn't have any up-to-date drivers for the SoundBlaster Audigy Platinum and that they only have the same driver CD that comes with the soundcard.

He gave us a replacement soundcard as he thought the other must be broken. This worked but then the next day when I turned on the computer, I had no sound again.

We were then told to bring the PC into Simply Computers. I didn't think it was very fair as I had paid for the on-site warranty and I was even more shocked when I was told I wouldn't get my computer back for at least five days.

Terry Weston

A Simply Computers got back to us smartish. "We contacted Mr Weston after receiving a copy of the letter he sent to you. The actual problem that prompted Mr Weston to contact us initially was a reported sound problem. This has since been rectified and Mr Weston has had his PC back since mid-January and it has continued to work fine since then. We did initially send an engineer to the customer's address to replace the soundcard, but this did not rectify the fault."

They say that the problem was actually down to the Windows OS and soundcard drivers being corrupted, and not a hardware failure: "We reconfigured and reinstalled all software and drivers when the system came back here, and everything was fine. It appears that the wrong driver may have been installed so our sending the drivers for the card to the customer was justified."

They say they have since contacted you and you are "happy that the system is now working and the situation has been resolved." If you get any other problems let us know. [PZ]

BUYER'S GUIDE

Are you looking to upgrade your PC? Since we've started this Buyer's Guide, prices have dropped consistently every month – and we'll keep on checking to ensure that this guide gives you the most accurate and up-to-date information. While we're on the subject, memory is dirt cheap as well – if you're still labouring with less than 128Mb RAM, buy some now

◀ BEST BUY

BEST BUDGET ▶

MOTHERBOARD
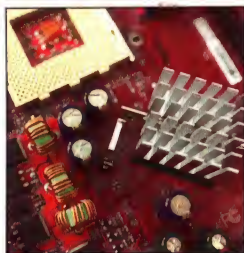
MSI K7N420 PRO

STREET PRICE £122 inc VAT
TELEPHONE N/A
MANUFACTURER MicroStar International
WEBSITE www.msi.com.tw

The Asus A7V266-E just gets edged off its deserved plinth by a motherboard featuring the NVIDIA nForce 420D chipset. In testing, the board showed superb performance in the crucial OpenGL and DirectX 8.1 tests. It has a number of optional extras, so check with the retailer what to expect in the box you buy – integrated LAN, additional USB slots, TV out and digital audio out are all available. Bear in mind that if you have an old video card, you may not need a new one with this board – it has a GeForce 2 MX class GPU integrated into the Northbridge… for free! Bit of a bonus…

**GIGABYTE GA-7VTXH**

STREET PRICE £90 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Gigabyte
TELEPHONE 01908 362700
WEBSITE www.gbt-tech.co.uk

Usurps another great Gigabyte board – this one is a great Via KT266A-based DDR solution. Integrated on board are both 10/100 LAN and four-channel audio from Creative, and yet it costs less than a ton. In testing it proved stable and among the faster DDR boards for Athlon. A complete bargain.
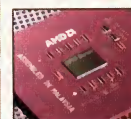
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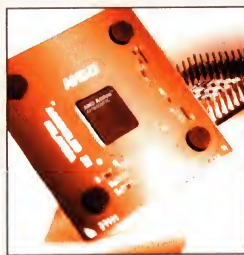
AMD ATHLON XP 1700+

STREET PRICE £114 inc VAT
TELEPHONE N/A
MANUFACTURER AMD
WEBSITE www.amd.com

WAS £119 NOW £114

The Athlon XP processors are named after the clockspeed of Intel processors it claims to beat. The 1700+ actually runs at a clockspeed of 1.47GHz, and with new so-called QuantiSpeed architecture, more on-chip cache and souped-up 3DNow! instruction set, it offers superb performance in a range of applications – not least games. While the 2000 is currently the fastest processor in the range, the 1700+ is good value for money. Ensure your Socket A motherboard has an updated BIOS and correctly rated components to run an XP processor before you fork out.

DURON 1000

STREET PRICE £49 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER AMD
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.amd.com

WAS £52 NOW £49

Durons are basically Athlons with smaller Level 2 (L2) processor caches. This still compares favourably with Intel's ageing Celeron chip cache structure. Besides, Duron still has the blistering Floating Point Unit (FPU) mathematical calculation speed, making it a top processor for gamers.

HARD DRIVE

SEAGATE BARRACUDA ATA IV 60GB

STREET PRICE £98 inc VAT
TELEPHONE 01628 890 366
MANUFACTURER Seagate
WEBSITE www.seagate.com

We have a new Best Buy hard drive – the 60Gb Seagate Barracuda ATA IV. The IBM Deskstar 75GXP drives are looking a bit long in the tooth alongside this modern beastie. Although it's a 7,200 RPM drive, it runs both cooler and quieter than its peers, which can only be a good thing. Fully loaded with a 2Mb cache, the performance is solid across the board, both in terms of average seek times and sustained data throughput. We recommend the 60Gb drive on the basis that it seems pretty good value for money, though the range also offers 20, 40 and 80Gb variants.

SEAGATE U SERIES 6 40GB

STREET PRICE £70 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Seagate
TELEPHONE 01628 890366
WEBSITE www.seagate.com

The U Series 5 drives are now pretty much unavailable, but is replaced in the Buyer's Guide by its own replacement. The U Series 6 drive has much the same spec as the Series 5, but runs quieter and cooler. We've also uprated capacity to 40Gb – great value.

MONITOR

IIYAMA VM PRO 512 22IN

STREET PRICE £633
TELEPHONE 01438 745482
MANUFACTURER iiyama
WEBSITE www.iiyama.co.uk

Our long-standing Best Buy monitor, the VM Pro 510, is superseded by the 512. Equipped with the latest Mitsubishi aperture grille Diamondtron screen, it has a rather smaller viewable area than suggested, closer to 20 inches than 22, but gives outstanding results at resolutions up to 2048x1536 at 85Hz – something many graphics cards can't even support. If your video card has the bandwidth, you can rely on this monitor to give you pin-sharp results at 1600x1200. There's also the useful inclusion of a four-port USB hub as well as a pair of speakers – even if they do sound a bit tinny.

HANSOL 710P 17IN

STREET PRICE £151 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Hansol
TELEPHONE 01252 360400
WEBSITE www.hansol-uk.com

For the budget-conscious gamer, Hansol is a company well worth a look. With a fabulously low price, it will handle 1024x768 with a vertical refresh rate of 85Hz, and 1600x1200 at a creditable 75Hz. There's not a lot that'll touch this for the money.

GRAPHICS CARD

VISIONTEK XSTASY GEFORCE 4 TI4600

STREET PRICE £362 inc VAT
TELEPHONE N/A
MANUFACTURER VisionTek
WEBSITE www.visiontek.com/uk

We've just had the first batch of GeForce 4 cards cross the *PC ZONE* bench, and we have a new high-end winner – though it's gonna cost you an arm and a leg for the time being. Move over GeForce 3 Ti500 – here comes the GeForce 4 Titanium 4600, supplied by VisionTek. The clever memory architecture of the GeForce 4 Titanium processor, coupled with 650MHz DDR memory, gives this card bandwidth fearsome enough to cope with FSAA, as well as high resolutions – at blistering frame-rates. It's faster than Radeon, faster than GeForce 3. It even blows Xbox out of the water. Price shown is a conversion of the Euro RRP; no street price is available yet.

VIDEOLOGIC VIVID!XS 32MB

STREET PRICE £71 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER VideoLogic
TELEPHONE 01923 277488
WEBSITE www.videologic.com

The new Kyro II chipset blows its slower Kyro brethren to smithereens at 175MHz clock speed. The 32Mb Vivid!XS replaces the Hercules 3D Prophet 4500 as Best Budget Buy – but only just, there's barely anything to choose between the two.

◀ BEST BUDGET

BEST BUY ▶

HERCULES GAMESURROUND FORTISSIMO II

STREET PRICE £36 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Hercules
TELEPHONE (020) 8686 5600
WEBSITE www.hercules-uk.com

This four-channel audio card represents excellent value for money and its DirectSound 3D support is gib-tastic. You can even get four channels of surround sound from your DVD movies with a special version of PowerDVD!
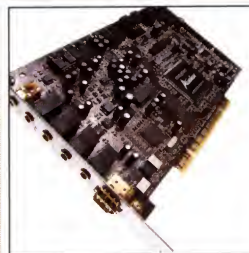
CREATIVE LABS SOUND BLASTER AUDIGY PLAYER

NOW £79 WAS £82

STREET PRICE £79 inc VAT
TELEPHONE N/A
MANUFACTURER Creative Labs
WEBSITE www.europe.creative.com

The SonicFury gets pipped to the post by the excellent new Audigy Player from Creative Labs. Successor to the very successful Sound Blaster Live! series, the Audigy has an audio engine four times as powerful, excellent audio quality, and a range of features that makes it the most versatile all-round gaming/music/DVD soundcard. EAX Advanced HD adds a range of new 3D audio features, though it'll be a while before games filter through with support for the more esoteric options. It's about £20 more expensive than its main competition, but we reckon it's well worth it.

MICROSOFT GAMEVOICE USB

STREET PRICE £49.99 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Microsoft
TELEPHONE 0870 601 0100
WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/sidewinder/

So how can a set of budget headphones cost more than our Best Buy? It's simple really – the GameVoice enables you to talk to your mates over the Internet. It works very well, and as they double as a more than decent set of headphones, they're a bit of a bargain.

SENNHEISER HD 200 MASTER

STREET PRICE £45
TELEPHONE 01494 551 551
MANUFACTURER Sennheiser
WEBSITE www.sennheiser.co.uk

This German audio company has been around for more than 50 years, founded by the suitably Teutonic-sounding Dr Fritz Sennheiser. The HD200s are actually targeted at DJs, and for good reason. They're very, very loud. They're very, very strong. They have a closed back design, meaning you can hear nearby rocket jumpers comfortably while her indoors has *EastEnders* turned up high enough so she can hear it from the kitchen. And, crucially for extended gaming sessions, they're comfortable and light, weighing around 140g. A great pair of cans at a top price – what you waiting for?

TEAC CDW58EK 8X8X32

STREET PRICE £72 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Teac
TELEPHONE 01923 225235
WEBSITE www.teac.co.uk

I've just had to buy a load of CD/RW drives and these Teac drives were dead cheap, easy to install and have worked without a hitch. Bearing in mind my first CD-RW drive cost me well over £250 and was flaky and slow, these babies are a good deal. Shop around and you're laughing…

PLEXTOR 16/10/40A

STREET PRICE £115 inc VAT
TELEPHONE +32 2 725 5522
MANUFACTURER Plextor
WEBSITE www.plextor.com

We've been running Plextor CDs, DVDs and CD-Rs for years in our machines and they're a) bulletproof and b) fast as anything you'll get within a few quid of the asking price. This is a drive that is dead fast, offers Sanyo Burnproof technology and is competitively priced alongside some good contenders from Yamaha and Mirai. It comes with WinOnCD (nowhere near as good as Nero but proven) and offers CD-R, CD-RW and fast CD-Read performance. I'd upgrade, but my ancient SCSI 6x Plextor CD-R still cuts the mustard – three years on…

SAITEK CYBORG 3D GOLD

NOW £30 WAS £45

STREET PRICE £30
MANUFACTURER Saitek
TELEPHONE 01454 451900
WEBSITE www.saitek.com

Saitek's current generation of sticks are fabulous. The Cyborg Gold is a top-line USB stick that excels across the board. The design is superb, both strong and adjustable – even lefties are catered for – and its response and accuracy are unequalled.

MICROSOFT SIDEWINDER FORCEFEEDBACK 2

STREET PRICE £62 inc VAT
TELEPHONE 0870 601 0100
MANUFACTURER Microsoft
WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/products/hardware/sidewinder/sidewinder.htm

Force-feedback products aren't everyone's cup of tea, but nothing comes close to the SideWinder FF2. It's a huge, heavy tabletop affair, with the power transformer built into the base. An infrared sensor causes the stick to leap to attention when you grasp it, which might be a bit startling, but is still rather good. The force-feedback routines work extremely well – mainly because the motors are so powerful. If more games made better use of the technology, it would be a must-have piece of gear.
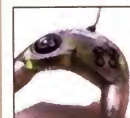
SIDEWINDER PLUG 'N' PLAY

STREET PRICE £12
MANUFACTURER Microsoft
TELEPHONE (0870) 601 0100
WEBSITE www.microsoft.com/sidewinder/

Four buttons, two triggers, directional pad, USB. Dead simple, dead effective and really rather cheap. The Plug 'n' Play Gamepad is the new basic controller from the Seattle Sidewinders and comes in funky transparent plastic, in contrast to the gloomy black pads of yesteryear.

THRUSTMASTER FIRESTORM DUAL-POWER GAMEPAD

STREET PRICE £26
TELEPHONE (020) 8686 5600
MANUFACTURER Thrustmaster
WEBSITE www.thrustmaster.co.uk

We may not be that fond of Thrustmaster's joysticks, but this force feedback joypad and its non-force feedback cousin, the Firestorm Dual Analogue, are superbly designed. The Firestorm Dual Power sports no fewer than 13 control buttons, not to mention the twin analogue directional hats. As a result, it's one of the most versatile controllers on the market, equally at home with arcade-style games that need digital pads or flight sims requiring more progressive analogue control. Also included is Thrustmapper software that allows you to customise its behaviour in any game. Delicious, especially at this price.

HERCULES XPS210

STREET PRICE £40 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Hercules
TELEPHONE 020 8665 1881
WEBSITE www.hercules-uk.com

This small but perfectly formed 2.1 speaker set is cheap – but doesn't sound it. With tone controls and stereo enhancement, it's an ideal solution for desktop gaming. The satellites and subwoofer are well matched, giving a decent overall sound. And adorned in royal blue, it looks the part too…

KLIPSCH PROMEDIA 4.1

STREET PRICE £299
MANUFACTURER Klipsch
TELEPHONE 0031 314 383 699
WEBSITE www.klipsch.com

Take your pick for Best Buy between the stunning Klipsch 4.1 THX-approved speakers and the cheaper long-term favourites Sirocco Crossfire from Videologic. Both represent great value for money, but the Klipsch edge it in the listenability stakes, hence their new entry here. They're beautifully made, sound amazing and are the first speakers that can split your ears just as well as the Crossfires. You'll find no better speaker set-up for watching DVDs and playing games on PC.

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- ● Colin McRae Rally 2.0
- ● Half-Life: Uplink
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All gifts subject to availability. Allow 28 days for delivery. Please note that Windows 95 is required for most programs on the FREE CD ROMs and that most of them have limited functionality.

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Subscribing to PC ZONE just got better! With the new DVD version just out, you can now choose how much game software you get with your monthly issue. And best of all, whether you choose the DVD or CD-ROM version, you'll make a huge 33% saving on the shop price.

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PRETTY IN PINK

■ PINK LADY Rhianna Pratchett

▲ The new-look *PC ZONE* is not the only new thing round here. We've recently relocated from our green, living-in-a-can-of-Lilt basement to the dizzying pink (or is it fuchsia?) heights of the second floor. The upheaval was somewhat stressful since many of us had not seen the light of day before, but since our nearest view is one of a brick wall, we're feeling right at home. It hasn't been without its merits though, as we unearthed a multitude of treasures from the depths of drawers, cupboards and anything being used as a footrest.

Richie was found to be the worst hoarder of junk, and some of the more bizarre finds came from his side of the room, including a Battle Isle toothbrush and toothpaste set and a bottle of water from Atari. Even though the latter has been around long enough to be housing hitherto unknown life forms, he insists it will be worth money one day. Possibly when the world runs out of water.

In other news, the subject of cheating has always been a hot topic, especially on our forums, and Phil Wand's two-part feature on cheating starts on page 120. Tony Lamb slips on a parka and jumps on his power-of-a-hairdryer scooter to bring you the best mod reviews around on page 122, while I'm catering to all your extra

▼ gaming needs right here.

CHEATS AHOY!

Apologies to anyone who's been looking for cheats on our cover discs this month – we're still designing the front end. But from next month we'll have all the latest cheats, tips and walkthroughs available on the discs. That's a promise. But there's no need to go without in the meantime – you can still gorge yourself on CheatStation, which you'll find on the *PC ZONE* website.

King of the castles

ON THE DVD ■ Feeling like a dirty rascal? Try these new castles for *Stronghold*
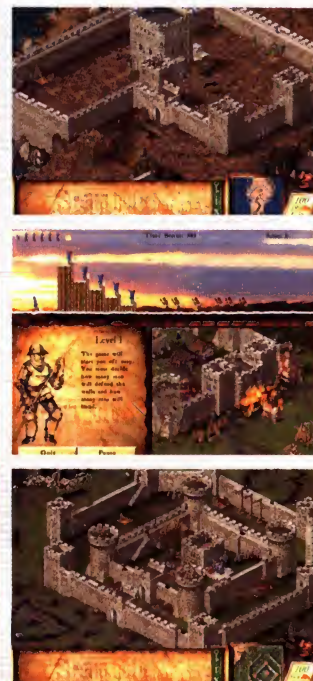■ http://www.take2games.co.uk./downloads/extras.php

Medieval warfare at its very finest.

STRONGHOLD may not have been the most original sim-building game, but its combination of detailed and realistic graphics combined with well-structured missions and accessible gameplay made it the ultimate in medieval Lego. This month sees the release of a whole host of *Stronghold* goodies, including lots of new castles based on real-life and mythological fortresses.

The *Stronghold Excalibur* pack contains three castles based on Arthurian mythology: Camelot, Tintagel and Mordred's Fortress, which you can choose to either attack or defend. The famous Camelot, home to King Arthur, is an impressive dual-walled fortress with a blooming economy, which you will have

Camelot: 'tis a silly place.

to sabotage to stand any chance of doing some close-up Arthurian beard tweaking. Tintagel was constructed as legend has it by Arthur's father, Uther Pendragon, with the aid of the powerful Merlin, so be prepared for a few nasty surprises hidden behind the walls. Mordred's Fortress is rumoured to be impenetrable and you'll need to brave swamps, rivers of pitch and a small army of attack dogs before you even get close to sticking Excalibur where the sun don't shine. There are also five new historical castles available to download: Edinburgh, the Tower of London, Harlech, Haut-Koenigsbourg, and Koblenz Stolzanfels.

Also back by popular demand is an enhanced version of the addictive mini-*Stronghold* game *Castle Attack*. This version dubbed *Super Castle Attack* still has the same basic feature as the original game in that you balance your forces between building your walls and defending them. This version gives you two extra archers and harder scenarios as you attempt to fend off the relentless enemy onslaughts. Better than a bucket and spade any day.

Terror on the streets

The finest real-world mod for *QIII*, *Urban Terror* points to life beyond *Half-Life*

■ www.urbanterror.net

IN THE WORLD of *Quake III* modding *Urban Terror* is the undisputed Godfather. This huge full conversion mod sought to take *QIII* into a more realistic environment while keeping the gameplay dynamics as pure as possible. Development was started by Silicon Ice development way back in late 1999, and the mod has just had its beta 2.4 and 2.5 release. Developments in the 2.4 beta included a volumetric laser scope which works in water, fog and smoke, a new instant arm mode for grenades (and less lag when throwing) and improved knife hit detection. This was closely followed by beta 2.5, which corrects a few of the issues thrown up by 2.4, such as problems with skin coding and server lag.

With the continued success of *Counter-Strike* and the promise of a retail version of *Tactical Ops*, it seems that *Quake III* is lagging behind somewhat in the commercial mod release stakes. These latest betas only go to show that *Urban Terror* is going from strength to strength, and id Software would do well to raid a few piggy banks, turn out a few pockets and give *Urban Terror* the boost it deserves.

Urban Terror: all the tactics of *C-S* with all the speed of *Quake III*.

Aliens Vs Predator 2

■ www.planetavp.com

IF YOU WEREN'T scared by what Monolith did with *Alien Vs Predator 2*, then take the bull by the horns and create your own bowel-evacuating levels with the new *AvP2* toolkit. You'll find it on our DVD this month along with the toolkit patch, which is on both the CD and DVD. The main kit consists of all the tools for custom-building levels and creating creatures and other game content, and has already created a flurry of maps and mods on the www.planetavp.com site. So keep an eye on this section as we'll be bringing you updates and reviews on the latest and greatest in *AvP2* modology.

Remember… short, controlled bursts.

Monopoly Tycoon

■ www.tycoonresorce.com

FANS OF *Monopoly Tycoon* (the game that shows us we're all money-hungry bastards underneath) will be chuffed to hear that Deep Red have released not one but two extras packs for the game. The first includes two new scenarios (You Got It All and the Austin Powers-esque Swinging Sixties) as well as several utilities such as being able to set textures for the sky and fog. The second pack contains a similar bundle of new scenarios, residential and retail building models, and for those of you wanting to create you own little Essex-style corner there's even a mock-Tudor building texture. Both need the version 1.3 patch to run.

Pea-soup London with fog effects.

Tropico

■ http://www.strategyplanet .com/tropico/downloads. shtml

WE THOUGHT *Tropico* was a bit of a missed opportunity, but we know there are hordes of wannabe dictators out there who'll want to know the following… Firstly the new v1.07 patch has been released which is basically a quick fix for a couple of minor bugs in v1.06 – including the phenomenon of dead bodies haunting maps forever rather than disappearing after a few months. There are also lots of new additions for the *Tropico* map editor, which you'll find on this month's DVD, including an in-depth scenario manual to help you create those sick dictatorial dreams we know you've all been having.

Design your own scenarios for *Tropico*.

PUNK ASS BITCHES: HOW TO SPOT A CHEAT

It's sad, but many players need to cheat to win. In this two-part feature, *Phil Wand* looks at how cheating has become rife in the world's most popular game, and what's being done to stop it

ROBERT BYRNE, author of *Advanced Technique In Pool And Billiards*, will be remembered not for his potting skills but for something he once said. "In order to preserve your self-respect," he announced, "it is sometimes necessary to lie and cheat."

Oh, come on, don't look so shocked. How many notes have you nicked from Monopoly banks over the years? How often have you prolonged the agony of I Spy by saying "no" the whole time? How many times have you craned your neck to look at the flipside of a Trivial Pursuit card, or phoned a mate from a pub quiz? It's all cheating, you dirty scumbag, so wipe that innocent look off your face this instant.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF CHEATING

When it comes to computers, there have been cheats and cheaters for as long as there have been games and gamers. When single-player titles dominated the market, cheaters fooled nobody but themselves, and the moment multiplayer games got popular the practice almost disappeared – when two of you were sharing one

Realising he'd been rumbled, Lionel tried to explain he'd simply had too much Ready Brek that morning.

machine, playing dirty was as conspicuous as a diesel locomotive in your cornflakes. There were a few widely publicised cheats in the first version of *Doom* that allowed deathmatching marines to gain a sneak peak of their opponents' locations, but by the time *Doom II* was released such tricks were gone and everyone played nicely again. Until the Internet.

The Internet allows faceless gamers from unknown locations to cheat and get away with it. The people you're challenging aren't sat next to you, so you have no idea what they have on their screen; no clue as to what tricks they use to make them play beyond their true capabilities. Network games like *Tetrinet*, which has allowed people to play *Tetris* over the Internet since 1998, almost disappeared as a result of cheaters invading games and walking all over opponents with automated efficiency. Larger communities based around big-

name shooters – in particular *Team Fortress Classic* and *Counter-Strike* – have weight of numbers on their side, and the minority of con artists has become another aspect to playing online. But it's still a big problem for the average gamer, and a problem that doesn't look as though it'll ever go away.

CHEATER-STRIKE

A notable proportion of *TFC* and *Counter-Strike* players are cheating, have cheats stored somewhere on their hard drive, or have tried at least one of the better-known cheat programs like Half-Life Hack, xqz2, or OGC. Those who enjoy their game or who aren't that bothered by winning will have left well alone, but those who

see cheats as a route to previously unattainable heights will become repeat offenders. Over time, these people begin to take their artificially enhanced skills for granted, and having played so long with tricks and hacks they can no longer play a winning game without them.

Oliver Mulvey, head admin of the BarrysWorld Counter-Strike League, tells us that their anti-cheat software can catch over 100 cheaters a day. Many games services, including all the *PC ZONE* machines, use similar detection software that unmasks the con artists in around five seconds flat. They then have their WON ID and their IP address permanently barred from the server – it's a common misconception that just your name gets banned, and that a swift change of identity will allow you back in – thus ensuring everyone else gets a decent game in. Sadly, cheaters will always be one step ahead, and anti-cheat software developers struggling to keep up. On the next page we present a gallery of cheats available freely for download on the Internet. **PCZ**

WHAT'S THE POINT?

As well as aimbot, wallhack and soundhack, OGC allows cheaters to finely tune their game via on-screen menus. Here we've dropped all textures to make players stand out. Note the radar on the left – it shows both friendly and enemy units. OGC is without doubt a highly polished piece of software, but it makes the game somewhat dull and you have to wonder about the inadequacies of people who have to cheat to win.

NEXT MONTH

The second and final part of this feature looks at how widespread cheating has become, and some of the desperate measures being used to prevent it. We also try out several new cheat-busting programs for gamers to try, and give tips on how to spot and report the fraudsters.

We would like to thank the *PCZ* admin team, plus the Demon and BarrysWorld admins for their assistance in helping to compile this article.

OGC gives menu-driven access to a customisable aimbot.

Surpassed by wallhacks, spiked models were the original cheat in *CS*.

THE TERMINATOR (AIMBOT)

The aimbot makes a mockery out of any first-person shooter. Whenever an enemy player enters your line of sight, the cross-hairs take aim automatically. As he keeps moving, so your mouse magically tracks him. All you have to do is click on the button and slice open his head. Most cheaters use an aimbot only now and then, as it's the easiest hack to spot.

URI GELLER (WALLHACK)

The wallhack is the most commonly used cheat, blessing users with extra-sensory perception. The position of every player is clearly marked, usually in the form of a brightly coloured or glowing box, and without caring if there's a wall between you and them.
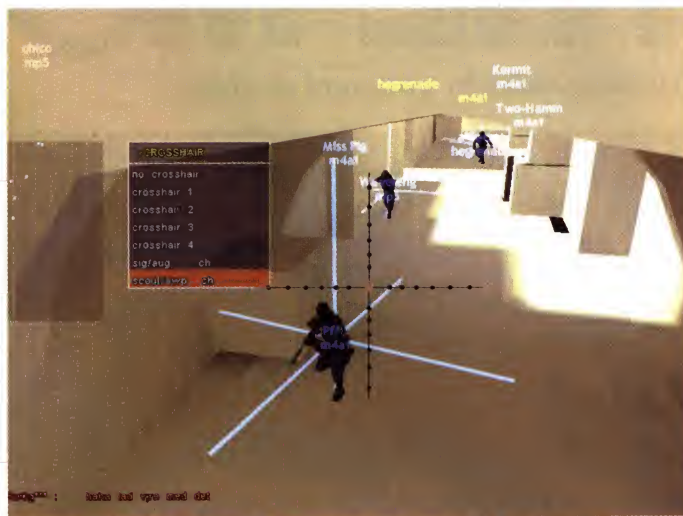
Cheaters are able to lurk behind doors or in pipes and know exactly where people are and from which direction they will appear, and thus have a considerable advantage. Unlike the aimbot, it's extremely difficult to spot a competent wallhacker unless they're being blatant about it.

Some cheats allow you to see through doors – you can even configure if they're transparent or semi-transparent.

DOCTOR X-RAY (TRANSPARENT ENTITIES)

In addition to the wallhack, there's this little gem: the wall remover. It allows you to make any of the games many entities – doors, hatches, boxes, ladders, you name it – transparent. This isn't actually as useful as it sounds, as you spend most of the time fumbling for a ladder you can't see or walking into doors that to you look open but which are actually shut. So while seeing through walls might ostensibly seem a rather handy thing to be able to do, the wall remover does in fact have its disadvantages.

PORCUPINE ZOO (SPIKED MODELS)

Along with laser spikes for *Team Fortress Classic* snipers, model spikes are one of the oldest hacks around. They make it very easy to spot players, and in a tactical game like *Counter-Strike* they provide a serious advantage.

Anyone lurking in a dark corner ready to snipe will become as obvious as, well, as obvious as someone with a ten-metre barge pole poking out of their head.

THE SCRIPT KIDDIE (CONFIG FILES)

Scripts allow *Half-Life* players to exploit bugs in the game's code, often by performing certain actions in rapid succession. Results include counteracting the recoil on heavier weaponry in *Counter-Strike*, and allowing *Team Fortress Classic* spies to shoot rifles when disguised. While many of these scripts are rendered useless by updates from Valve, it's hard for developers to stay one step ahead of the cheats, and new ones appear every week.

THE AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER (RADAR)

Among others, Half-Life Hack gives cheaters a long-range radar similar to the one seen as standard in *Counter-Strike*. Only this one shows you the position of everyone on the map – opponents and team-mates alike. All-seeing radar means you are never surprised by incoming units, are able to warn others of attacks, and can ambush the enemy so that they are left reeling.

THE CROSS-DRESSER (SKIN HACKS)

Early aimbots employed a ridiculously simple hack to change the way players looked. Cheaters would run the aimbot in Windows, upload new, brightly coloured versions of the player model files, and then run *Counter-Strike* as normal. Each time one of the new models moved through the crosshairs, the software would be alerted to click the mouse button on your behalf. These skin hacks were particularly useful on their own, as they made lurking enemy snipers stand out like call girls at a nunnery.

Half-Life Hack in all its glory, pinpointing every player's position.

A number of cheats identify bad guys by dressing them in bright colours.

THE MODSQUAD

Tony Lamb chills in a blizzard of mods

You need to deploy machine guns to get any accuracy in *DOD*.

The sniper rifle is very effective, but beware muzzle-flash giveaways.

MOD OF THE MONTH

DAY OF DEFEAT BETA 2

ON THE DVD ■ www.dayofdefeatmod.com
SIZE 139Mb **REQUIRES** Full version of Half-Life

IT'S now a year since *Day Of Defeat* first graced these pages and at that time it represented one of very few World War II-themed FPS environments. We're now enjoying the treats of *Medal Of Honor* and *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* – full-blown, full-price games – so how does this mere mod measure up to

that sort of heavyweight competition? The answer is that *DoD2* is a gem. It's fun, immersive, rich in ambience and crammed full with detail. This update propels what was already a good mod into the superleague, and its host of features puts it squarely into competition with some of the

best-known realism mods around now.

Beta 2 is a complete rewrite, with the *DoD* team adding in new features and gameplay changes on the way. The atmosphere is the same, but the manner of execution has improved immensely as every area of the mod has seen some

serious refinement. Player models and animations are vastly better than before, and weapon effectiveness (accuracy and damage) is far more realistic. The maps have been redesigned and refined to great effect, the sounds – both immediate and 'background' – add atmosphere by the bucketful. In fact, there

isn't a single area of this mod that doesn't ooze class. If you've got any interest in WWII then you'll be gagging to have a go. And it's free… even better.

PCZONE VERDICT 88
Superb and realistic

WEAPONS FACTORY UT 107B & OFFICIAL MAP PACK

ON THE DVD ■ www.planetunreal.com/weaponsfactory
SIZE 29Mb **REQUIRES** Full version of Unreal Tournament

THIS mod has an illustrious lineage dating back to the *QII* original of which many players have fond memories. In fact, the idea of *WFUT* is to start where *WFQII* ended, bringing the *Weapons Factory* class-based CTF style of play into *Unreal Tournament* (as has been done with *Weapons Factory Arena* in *Quake III* and the ongoing *Half-Life* version). In essence, it's much like old favourite *Team Fortress Classic*, with several player classes – Recon, Engineer, Nurse, Soldier, Gunner and so on – relying on teamplay and co-operation to win. The maps are enjoyable and well designed (grab the map-pack too), weapons are suitably

Your HUD tells you everything you need to know.

potent, and the whole mod is very enjoyable although only the multiplayer option is really viable – but it needs more servers to give it the popularity it deserves.

PCZONE VERDICT 80
Familiar fragging fun

FUSION PACK 6 FOR COUNTER-STRIKE

SOMETIMES we'd all like to see some improvements – even in *CS*. This is where the *Fusion Packs* come in and while these have traditionally been about new weapon models, improved sound effects and the occasional other (non-code) tweak, Pack 6 has stepped up a gear and provides a complete single-player option with bot support. Not only that, but included waypoint files leave the door open for future SP mapping endeavours too. The Pod-Bot puts in an appearance, and will happily twat the less wary player. Also included are revised graphics, sprites and sound elements. It's all very good, but the bot and SP option is a great move. Much cheaper than waiting out games online too…

PCZONE VERDICT 78

*That's nice… your gun reminds me which side you're on.*

UNREAL4EVER V6 & V602 PATCH

WE tasted *U4E* before and after a hefty mouthful decided it was a cheeky little number, well rounded and a little fruity, but not really possessing enough flavour to make it into a decent vintage. Something to gargle on before moving onto something meatier. Add the 602 patch however and there's a definite improvement, adding yet more weapons and craziness to this already spaced-out mod. In fact, if the website is anything to go by *U4E* is on its way to becoming even more outlandish. Unfortunately, online servers are still in short supply – which is a shame – but *UT* has bots to blast and with a list of weapons, such as tomahawks, freeze-rays, a pitchfork and a doll that goes bang like a hundredweight of semtex, nobody should complain. The modelling is good, the maps are enjoyable and the whole package is fun in a simple, deathmatch-only way.

PCZONE VERDICT 85

U4E maps keep the action coming.
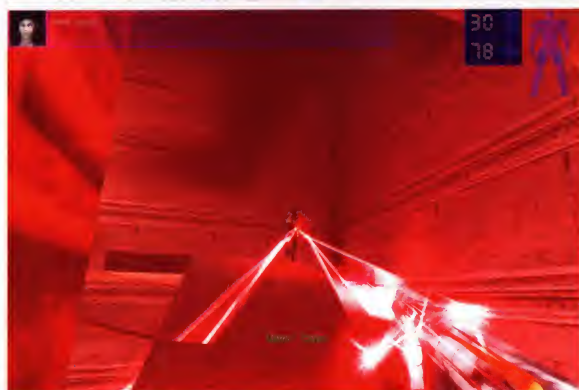
XMAPS

XMAPS isn't strictly a mod – it's a utility that looks after and controls maps and mutators. It is however, incredibly useful, comfortably earning its "must-have" billing. Working with both standalone and multiplayer games, it does away with the standard *UT* limit of 32 custom maps per game type, allowing instead up to 100 map lists with up to 150 maps in each one. You could download and categorise maps all day long and not reach the limit. What's more, Xmaps will watch over your mutator settings, and let you switch maps or game types on the fly. You can also match team numbers and take control of many other *UT* features without ever needing to leave the game. Worth its weight in gold.

PCZONE VERDICT 85

An essential utility for UT.

DISC PAGES

■ **DISCS** Matt Cheshire **WORDS** Matt Cheshire, Rhianna Pratchett and Martin Korda

STAR TREK
BRIDGE COMMANDER

CD1/DVD Pub: Activision **Reviewed:** Issue 114 (83%)

Over the past few years, a number of promising *Star Trek* licenses have drowned in the sea of mediocrity. Few have risen to the ranks of the great, but every now and again a gem arrives. *Bridge Commander* fits in to this category perfectly, especially if you're a fan of the series.

This exclusive demo offers two types of game – a single-player mission and Quick Battle mode. The latter gives you the choice of commanding and/or fighting three types of ship – a Federation Starship, a Romulain Warbird, or a Klingon Bird of Prey. Combat takes place in any one of five different locations in space, and you can choose to fight as many ships as you like. You can also get friendly ships to fight with you against the common enemy.

The mission gives you a taste of the diplomatic side of the federation, as well as offering the chance for some action. If you never went to Federation charm school, see below for some diplomatic pointers.
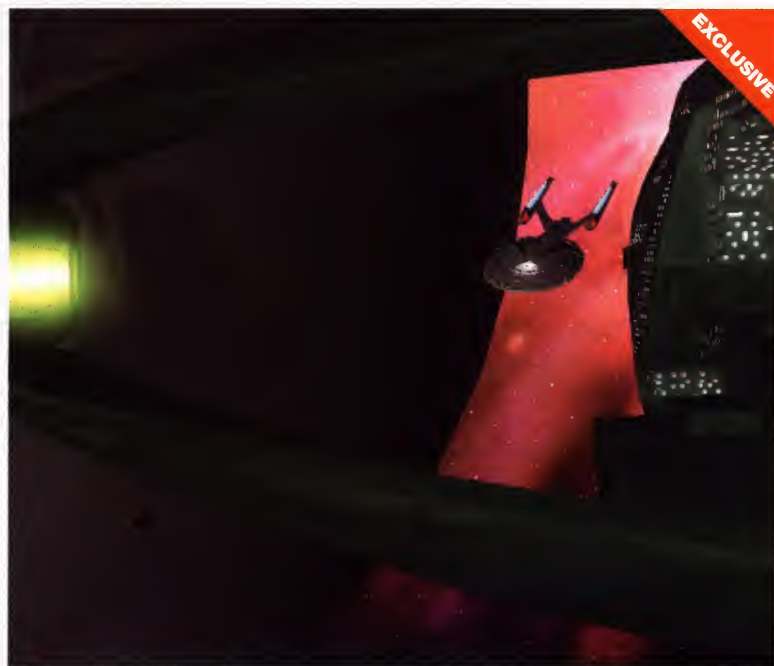

'I'm sure they said turn left at the Degaba system...'

WALKTHROUGH →

1 The starting point of the mission sees you in the space version of 'dry' dock – vacuum dock if you will. Captain Picard will board your ship, along with your new first officer, and he'll offer advice on the workings of the ship before giving the order to leave dry dock. At this point, it's best to take the time to listen to what he says and get a feel for your bridge. Each crewmember serves a different function, so make sure you familiarise yourself with their duties before getting underway.
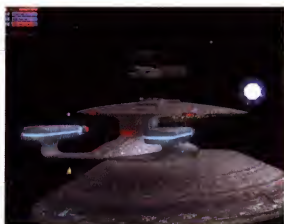
2 Proceed to Starbase 12 for supplies. Give this command to the helm by selecting the helmswoman and using the menu. After collecting your supplies, head to the Vesuvi system by giving the order to your ensign. Once there you'll be asked to destroy five large chunks of debris. Click on your first officer and go to Red Alert to bring your weapons online. Select your tactical officer and have him target each chunk and destroy each manually or get him to do the job for you.

3 Once you've obliterated all the chunks, you need to destroy a further load of debris, this time much bigger, which is heading straight for the planet you need to deliver supplies to. Again, have your tactical officer target these and destroy them as quickly as you can. Handy tip: As well as getting your engineer to boost power to the weapons so your phasers recharge quicker, get him to boost your engines so you can get to each fragment faster.

4 The next thing you must do is orbit the planet and transport the supplies. Select the helm and click on orbit, then select Vesuvi. Supplies will be transported automatically. Once you've completed this task you need to warp to the Tevron system to aid a Federation ship in distress. The ship is being guarded by two Klingon Birds of Prey. After an exchange of greetings, you will be interrupted by two Romulain Warbirds, who will uncloak and begin to attack the Federation ship.

5 Boost power to your weapons and shields and lower the power to the engine and sensor array to compensate. Hopefully, you should be able to teach the pointy-eared rogues a valuable lesson in manners before warping to the Geki mining colony to deliver yet more relief to the needy colonists. With any luck, your first mission will be a success, Captain, and if you liked what you saw here you can also try the Quick Battle mode for extra combat experience.

Destroy enemy units to gain extra credits.

You won't get any closer than this if you don't disable opposing defences.

COMMAND & CONQUER: RENEGADE

**CD2/DVD Pub:** Electronic Arts **Reviewed:** Issue 113 (73%)

It's hard to imagine there's a gamer out there who hasn't heard of the Command & Conquer series, and we'll bet those who have will associate C&C with RTS games. The latest game in the series is a bit different – Westwood has decided to inject some first-person action into the C&C universe with mixed results.

The demo is multiplayer only, but there are plenty of servers available online through GameSpy. The action is objective-based, pitting the GDI team against the NODs with the aim being the destruction of the other team's base by either battering it with heavy artillery or by placing a Nuclear Strike beacon or Ion Cannon beacon in the opposition's beacon zone. If both bases are still standing at the end of a game, the team with the most points wins.

You can buy a number of vehicles in the demo, including the stealth and flame tanks, and mobile artillery, all of which are ideal for blasting on your opponent's buildings. You can also choose your class of player at the purchase screens located inside your home base. Here are a few tips to help you out:Use heavy artillery to pummel opposing buildings from the outside, and try to take-out the opposition security towers first, as these will stop foot soldiers in seconds..
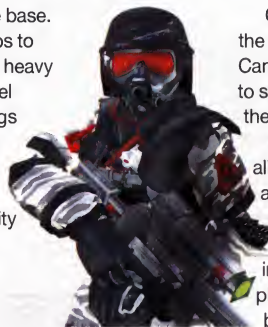
Credits accumulate as you play, and the all important Nuclear Strike or Ion Cannon beacons are pricey, so you need to stay alive for as long as possible to get the cash to buy them.

Also, don't go off on your own for an all-out attack as you won't last long against enemy defences. Finally, the GDI beacon zone is located in the GDI barracks, and the NOD beacon in the Hand of Nod, so concentrate on placing your Nuclear Strike/Ion Cannon beacons in these buildings.

WARRIOR KINGS

CD1/DVD Pub: Microids **Reviewed:** Issue 114 (90%)

Spears: useful.

Archers are more affective the higher they are.

Last issue we brought you the first UK review of this stunning 3D RTS from Black Cactus, lavishing it with praise and a much coveted PC ZONE Classic award. This month, you can see for yourself if we got it right by sampling the game in this demo.

After learning the subtleties of warfare and the particulars of building up a prosperous economy in the tutorial, you're thrown into a multi-quested mission in which you must save a village from marauding mercenaries and ape-like barbarians, among other goals. Tactics in Warrior Kings are of the essence, and using your surroundings to your advantage is a necessity if you are to come out victorious.

Start off by building farms and sending your peasants to gather resources. While they're busy, it's a good idea to take out the barbarian settlement on the ridge. Order your archers to rain down fire arrows on their huts while your spearmen deal with the hairy primates. This will remove the threat to the villagers with the minimum of effort. Use the rest of the mission to test out your tactical options, such as placing archers on high ground and marching in lines to speed up your troops' movements.

Warrior Kings is full of strategic depths and there's always something new to discover. This mission is the ideal starting point if you're thinking of buying the game in all its full-version glory.

STAR WARS: STAR FIGHTER

CD2/DVD Pub: Lucas Arts **Reviewed:** Issue 114 (65%)

The Star Wars license machine churns out another so-so game, but at least Starfighter makes a valiant attempt to recreate the glories and intense action of those epic space battles. This demo contains the second mission from the full game in which you have to protect the Royal starship from mercenary attacks.

Destroy these little buggers as fast as you can before they can take out the Royal starship.

SUPER BUBBLE POP

CD2/DVD Pub: www.realguide.real.com/games

This 3D puzzler has more than just a few Bust A Move undertones, and as with most arcade classics it's simple and addictive. In either single or two-player mode try and line up bubbles of the same colour, while collecting the power-ups and level tokens.

SBP Also has the added bonus of four difficulty levels and a none-too-shabby dance music soundtrack.

Candy coated bubble mayhem.

WARLORDS BATTLECRY 2

CD2/DVD Pub: Ubi Soft

Daemons show no mercy to penguins.

This fantasy-themed RTS would probably like to pretend that Warcraft never happened. Unfortunately it has, but this demo still has quite a bit of mileage in it. Tutorial mode teaches you the basics of building and managing your troops, which should be second nature to most RTS players anyway. You then get the opportunity to take on the computer as either Barbarians or Daemons, in skirmish mode, set scenarios or random maps. The readme contains two good guides to help you get to know both sides.

VIRTUA TENNIS

CD1/DVD Pub: Empire Interactive **Reviewed:** Issue 114 (80%)

Squint and you could kid yourself that you're looking at the real thing.

If you look on page 92 you'll see that Virtua Tennis was the surprise winner of our latest sports games Supertest.

It's been available on the Dreamcast for ages, but with that machine doing a runner Sega decided to let it loose on the PC, and for that we're eternally greatful.

Proof that you don't need a complicated control system, Virtua Tennis works on the simple concept of movement and two types of strtoke (standard and lob). The sort of shot you play depends on where you are in relation to the ball and the direction of your pad as you strike the ball.

Doesn't sound like it can provide hours of fun but it does, especially in two-player mode. This demo lets you play an exhibition match as Jim Courier against the formidable Yevgeny Kafelnikov.

NASCAR RACING 2002

CD1/DVD Pub: VU Games

Formula One's for whimps. Instead, slip into your racing suit, slide through the open window and get behind the wheel of a 750hp stock car in this, the latest NASCAR demo. First you have to take professional driving lessons, which are basically corner-by-corner tours narrated by the FOX television commentator Darrell Waltrip. Apparently he knows what he's talking about as he's also a five-times Coca-Cola 600 winner. After that it's onto the course for a test drive and finally a race around two well-known courses, the Atlanta Motor Speedway and the Richmond International Raceway.

If you forget what you're supposed to be doing keep going left and you won't go far wrong.

Treat yourself to a guided tour around the track in driving lesson mode.

TRAINS AND TRUCKS TYCOON

CD1 Pub: Ubi Soft

Even though there are no actual missions available in this transport sim demo, you do get to work your way through six comprehensive tutorials. Each one covers different aspects of the game from the basics of laying down tracks and roads and building up a working transport system, to more fiddly things like how to schedule your trains. However the last tutorial does contains a mini-mission where you get to put everything you've learnt in the previous five into practice. You'll need to work out the inefficiencies with the existing transport system at the start, then try and find ways to connect the industries with the transport network and reschedule the way your vehicles are dispatched in order to optimise turn-over. The goal of the mission is to make 5.000.000 Euros. What's that in pounds?

It's got trains, and my god it's got trucks. You play as the tycoon.

CUBIX: ROBOTS FOR EVERYONE

CD2 Pub: 4Kids Entertainment

And yes the girl has the cute looking robot.

In the future we'll all have robots. Robots for men, robots for kids, extremely slow robots for old ladies, even very small robots for hamsters, robots for everyone in fact. This rather twee console conversion racer lets you race and upgrade four robots in story mode, versus mode and coin race.

WORMS BLAST

Get your wriggling wormy pals to destroy the blobs to win points.

Those deadly worms are back but this time the style of game is a little bit different because this is (drum roll), *Worms* meets *Puzzle Bobble*..

As the name suggests the game is brilliant if you've got a mate to play against, and totally rubbish if you haven't. The idea is to avoid drowning, by firing projectiles into a group of like-coloured blobs. Score a hit and the blobs will tumble down.
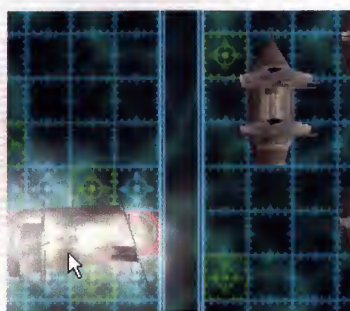
The best way to win though is to aim for the power-ups. Dislodge a crate and you'll get either a weapon, a shield or some extra health. Using the weapon power-ups the aim is to sink your opponent by fair means or foul. To add another dimension the barrier between the two playing fields drops every now and then leaving the way clear to fire a projectile onto your mate's head, or to destroy some of his crates before he can get his greedy little hands on them.

Generously, the demo lets you access puzzle mode, a single-player tournament and death-match action for player vs player or player vs computer. Enough to let you see for yourself that, although no classic, and not very original either, *Worms Blast* is, well, erm, a blast.

SEA WAR: THE BATTLES

We always like to include a demo for retro fans and this time it's a 3D version of the classic battleships game. It lets you play a basic game against the computer in a classic seascape enviroment (the full game also contains three other worlds). Unfortunately the demo is configured so that the computer always wins and gleefully brings up the message: 'If you wanna win register the game!' which is unlikely to endear the full game to potential buyers!

Damn. You sunk my battleship.

MOD REVIEWS	CD2
Counter-Strike Fusion Pack 6.0	Weapons Factory UT 1.07b
Unreal 4Ever 6.02 For UT	Xmaps

PATCHES	CD2
Aliens Versus Predator v1.0.9.4	Microsoft Train Simulator Update 1
Comanche 4 v1.0.1.15	**Monopoly Tycoon v1.3**
Etherlords v1.04	Rally trophy v1.01
Europa Universalis II v1.03	**Starfleet Command: Orions Pirates**
Evil Twin Patch #1	**v2.5.2.5**
Ghost Recon v1.1.5.0	Sub Command v1.05
Medal Of Honor UK	**Takeda v2.0**
Patch v1.10	PC Zone Patches Database

DVD EXCLUSIVES

ALL THE CONTENT ON THIS PAGE IS ONLY AVAILABLE ON THE DVD EDITION OF PC ZONE. TO SUBSCRIBE AND GET A PACKED DVD EVERY MONTH, TURN TO PAGE 116.

SUPERTEST

In this month's Supertest on page 92 we kicked, putted, potted, ollied and lobbed our way through some of the best sports games around. We're giving you the opportunity to test out these sporting beauties for yourselves, so try 'em and tell us what you think.

THE CONTENDERS
FIFA 2002
Virua Tennis
Virtual Pool 3
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2

EXTENDED PLAY

Animal Arena for Quake III
Urban Terror Beta 2.4
Monopoly Tycoon extras pack
Flight Sim Toolkit
Wolfenstein Maps
Wolfenstein SDK
Mech Warrior 4: Black Night Editor
AvP2 Toolkit
AvP2 Toolkit Patch
Medal Of Honor Skins
Medal Of Honor Wallpapers
Serious Sam – The First Encounter SDK
Max Payne Texture Pack 1
Max Payne Level selector
Stronghold Excalibur Pack
Stronghold – 4 Extra Castles
Stronghold Super Castle Attack
Rune Bonus Pack v2.20
GTK Radient
G Max

PLAYABLE DEMOS

Moto Racer 3
Tiger Woods PGA Golf Tour 2002
IL-2 Stumovik
Cycling Manager

THE MODSQUAD

The best new releases every month. See page 122 for full reviews.
HALF-LIFE
Day Of Defeat BETA 2.0
Desert Crisis
UNREAL TOURNAMENT
Tac Ops 2.2.0.0.
COUNTER-STRIKE
1.3 Full

PATCHES

Anarchy Online v13.5 to v13.6
Anarchy Online v13.6 to v13.7
Gorasul v1.05
Quake III Arena point release 1.31
Unreal Tournament 436
Half Life 1.1.0.8

ESSENTIALS

3Dmark 2001
GetRight 4.5c
Internet Explorer 5.5
Internet Explorer 6
Netscape 6.2.1
WinZip 8.1
ZoneAlarm 2.6.362
DirectX 8.0a for Windows 9.x
DirectX 8.1 for Windows 98/Millenium Edition
DirectX 8.1 for Windows 2000
Trillian 0.724
Winsock 2
GLsetup 1.21

MOVIES

Action Half-Life Beta 5.0
Dungeon Siege
Global Ops
Hitman 2
Jedi Knight II (x2)
Project IGI 2
Syberia
Salt lake 2002
Command & Conquer (x2)

These dwarfs live on mushrooms and hamsters, which tells you all you need to know.

DIGGLES: THE MYTH OF FENRIS

DVD **Pub:** Infogrames **Reviewed:** Issue 113 (68%)

It might seem a bizarre name for what is probably an even more bizarre game, but *Diggles* is an interesting and lively take on the whole sim-life genre. This demo lets you try your hand at controlling five *Diggles* dwarfs as they eat, sleep, bonk and dig their way deep underground in search of the magic rings of Fenris. It may seem a little confusing to start with, so just press F1 to bring up the in-game help menu.

HELI HEROES

DVD **Pub:** Zuxxez Entertainment

Shoot the bad guys and pick up the points and power-ups. Simple.

Heli Heroes will appeal to those who didn't lose their lust for scrolling shooters along with the onset of puberty. The object is to fly your military helicopter, with its annoyingly loquacious pilot, through a 3D Cold War meets The Terminator style landscape. This demo contains two training missions and the third and 18th missions from the full game.

TOP THREE STAR WARS AND STAR TREK TITLES

In celebration of our *Star Trek: Bridge Commander* and *Star Wars: Starfighter* demos we've decided to hit you with a double triple whammy and give you the top six *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* demos out there.

Star Wars Galactic Battle Grounds
X-Wing Alliance
Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II
Star Trek Voyager – Elite Force
Starfleet Command Volume II: Empires At War
Star Trek Deep Space Nine: The Fallen

Play how you want.

Ten straight games and that final victory is yours. You want it. You can feel it.
And with Wingman® Cordless Gamepads, you can have it. Play up to five meters away.
Get instantaneous response at any angle. And go more than 50 hours on a set of
batteries. So really, the only thing holding you back is your opponent's knee.
It's cordless freedom.

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Logitech

www.logitech.com/gamepad

Call 01753 870 900 for further details or your nearest stockist.

FIGHT CLUB

Membership is limited to those who love to take their agression out on others: on *PC ZONE*'s servers, the free-for-all or LAN parties across the country...

FIRST RULE of the *PC ZONE* Fight Club: you tell all your friends about the *PC ZONE* Fight Club. Second rule of the *PC ZONE* Fight Club: you tell all the miserable twats you don't like about the *PC ZONE* Fight Club then give them a right royal drubbing online. Third rule of the *PC ZONE* Fight Club: when the opposition are all fragged, the round is over, and a new one begins. Fourth rule of the *PC ZONE* Fight Club: there's a choice of two sides to play as – with us or against us – so make your choice wisely. Fifth rule of the *PC ZONE* Fight Club: only one server will be running at a time, meaning we will rotate

players if need be. Sixth rule of the *PC ZONE* Fight Club: no cheating, no infantile mewling. Seventh rule of the *PC ZONE* Fight Club: the server starts at 6.30pm and ceases at 9.30pm on the given date. Eighth and final rule of the *PC ZONE* Fight Club: if this is your first night at the *PC ZONE* Fight Club, enjoy it and come back next time.

You are only as good as your last performance. Reputation counts for nothing on the *PC ZONE* Free-For-All server. You're not special or unique until you prove you're good enough. Thursday April 18. Remember the date, and come and prove your worth...

We're playing *Wolfenstein* again because it's brilliant.

FREE-FOR-ALL CONNECTION DETAILS

So you think you're good eh? Well here's your chance to learn some humility by joining our Free-For-All. This month, we'll be running a *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* server. To join the server, first select Multiplayer from the game's main menu. Once there, change the Source setting to Favourites and left-click on the New Favourite panel. Call it 'PCZONE' and in the IP Address column type 62.49.226.110:1043 followed by left-clicking on OK. Now left-click on the Password box and type 'pczone', left-click on OK and hit Refresh to update your Favourites list. You should now see the *PC ZONE* server in your Favourites list. Highlight it and then left-click on Accept. You should now be taken straight to the action. Maps will cycle every 15-20 minutes, and in order to get as many of you a game as possible we may have to rotate players.

KNOW YOUR ENEMY

Dave Woods	Kid Unknown
Richie Shoemaker	Zapatero
Martin Korda	Nameless One
Anthony Holden	Shokupan
Mark Hill	Leatherface
Paul Presley	I R Baboon
Matthew Cheshire	Burnside
Phil Clark	Shit Kicker
Danny King-Smith	Ronin
Colin Mackleworth	M.A.C.H.I.N.E.

FREE-FOR-ALL

Thursday 18 April

6.30pm – 9.30pm

Return To Castle Wolfenstein server

PC ZONE GAME SERVERS Provided by www.games-world.net

THE *PC ZONE* GAME SERVERS ARE NOW MORE POPULAR THAN EVER AND TO ENSURE ONLY *PC ZONE* READERS CAN PLAY ON THEM, WE'VE DECIDED TO PASSWORD THEM ALL. DON'T WORRY THOUGH, EVERY MONTH WE'LL BE PRINTING THE PASSWORD YOU NEED TO GET FRAGGING

Quake III: Arena Public Server #1 – 194.93.134.24.27966
Quake III: Fortress Public Server #1 – 194.93.134.24.27968

Counter-Strike Public Server #1 – 194.93.134.49:27015
Counter-Strike Public Server #2 – 194.93.134.49:27020
Counter-Strike Public Server #3 – 194.93.134.51:27015
Counter-Strike Public Server #4 – 194.93.134.51:27020
(PC ZONE map pack)

Unreal Tournament Public Server #1 – 194.93.134.52:7787
Unreal Tournament Public Server #2 – 194.93.134.52:7777

Team Fortress Classic Public Server #1 – 194.93.134.50:27015
Team Fortress Classic Public Server #2 – 194.93.134.50:27020

PASSWORD: **broken**

LAN ROVER

***STEVE 'SCALPER' RANDALL* KNOWS ALL THE BEST LAN PARTIES...**

With BT finally dropping its broadband charges to a reasonable level, take-up will no doubt rocket. However, as satisfying as an online low-ping frag session is, it's not nearly as much fun as chatting to new friends while you drink beer and watch a one-on-one final on a projector. But, before I forget, here are the LAN parties going on this month.
■ In Reading on April 27-28 www. gamehedz.net £25 in advance, or £30 on the door.
■ Visit our all-new site at www.hglan. co.uk for details of LANs hosted by

myself and Paddyboy. £25 for two-three days of fragging, farting and flak.
■ www.lawlan.net are in Slough for three days from April 19-21 at a very reasonable £12 (payable in advance).
■ www.hglan.co.uk will be running its usual all-game extravaganza from March 29-31, in the Conference room at the Queen Mary College, London.
■ The fifth Savage LAN is in Coventry May 3-6. 175 seats are available, so check out www.savagelan.com/savlan5 for more info. Prices were unconfirmed at the time of going to press.

■ 100 people are needed in Exeter for the third LAN held by the crew at www.exe-lan.co.uk. Once again, the entrance fee has yet to be confirmed.

All the LANs tend to have 10/100 switches, most offer separate sleeping facilities if you need to stay overnight, and all will be playing *Quake III*, *Unreal Tournament* and most decent multiplayer games. If you want me to mention your LAN let me know at least two months in advance, and beer or bribes can also be forwarded to me at www.stevie@arsenalfc.net. Cheers for now. Scalper out.

MAILBOX

Everybody needs a good rant every now and again, and we're here to listen...

■ **HOLDING COURT** Dave Woods

The redesign issue: some of you hated it, most of you loved it, and we nearly died getting it done.

LOVE IT

This Saturday I received my copy of the new-look *PC ZONE* and spent three hours thoroughly enjoying it.

As a subscriber since issue 69 I reckon your reviews are more or less spot on, but another price increase? Thankfully I can say it's worth it. The reviews are much better and I can now instantly see when a game's going to be released and at what price. The emulation part is brilliant as most of us gamers enjoyed the C64 or Amiga as well. I'm a bit disappointed the Cheatmaster section's gone but that's no big deal. Keep up the good work.

Nick Mahlitz

Just quick note to congratulate you on your brilliant new look and content, especially the new hardware section, which gave me some wicked information that helped me update my PC. Nice one.

Craig Laver

As a long time reader of your magazine I was shocked, and initially a little concerned over the change in layout of the magazine. Having read through it, I have to say well done. In all honesty, it was about time *ZONE* had an image change, and the new look suits the magazine perfectly without compromising the content.

Thanks too for apparently reading my mind. I've recently been considering updating my PC's processor and mobo, and your article in the magazine will be extremely useful over the next month.

Richard Davies

PC ZONE, you've really gone and done it now. Last month you whet our appetite with tales of changes to the magazine including the introduction of a new (long overdue) DVD edition. I signed up to the DVD upgrade the next day and waited eagerly for the new arrival.

Now it's here and you have excelled yourselves. Your team have spent those four gruelling weeks well, by producing a piece of pure brilliance. I have seen *PC ZONE* change over the years and generally the look has mirrored that of others on the shelf. What set you apart then was the humour and the independent stance you took on delivering 'balls to the wall' honest reviews. What you have done is to keep the best of the best and package it in pure class. It looks, feels (are you using better paper?) and dare I say smells better. Inspired. Thank you for what you have given me and I look forward to a new era of *PC ZONE*.

Adrian Smith

I've never sent an email to your magazine before but, after seeing the latest issue, I couldn't contain myself. I really like the new design of *PC ZONE* and I believe that you are taking the mag in the right direction.

I've been buying and reading your magazine for nearly four years and it's always where I go to see how good a game is. I've bought loads of games after reading your reviews and I definitely agree with you on your scoring system. I can't see how people can complain when they get scores like 86 per cent. If a game I was interested in got that I'd definitely buy it.

One question on the new design: why have you taken the percentage scores out of the A-List? And where are the sports games?

Mark Lambert

HATE IT

I don't profess to know a thing about magazine publishing but I don't get the new look.

Sure, the pages are now colour-coded down one edge and there are a handful more this month, but there's not much more content. In fact, there seems to be bits missing.

I like the hardware reviews, but there's no Cheatmaster section for starters. And why do away with the scores in the In Perspective section in reviews? You make a big play on these scores but now choose not to use them for comparison.

The real killer though is the hike in price. How do you justify the increases?

Richard Cash

After reading Zone for the past few years maybe I'm the one who's at fault here (resistant to change possibly) but I don't like the new look. It seems to have lost the elements that made *ZONE* stand out from the crowd and instead it looks like just another games mag. To be fair the new hardware section is great and it's still the best mag in the world, but... Anyway, I'll probably change my tune in a couple of months so I wouldn't worry.

Mark Lambert

Cheers for all the comments about the redesign – 90 per cent of which were positive. As for the price rise, what can I say but sorry? We wanted better quality paper, we wanted to do a redesign and ultimately we had to face the facts that we couldn't unless we matched the cost of our competitors.

"What set you apart was the humour and the independent stance you took on delivering honest reviews"

ADRIAN SMITH

We've taken the scores from the A-List but the games are still ranked in order. With original scores, budget scores, and update scores (for patches and multiplayer reviews) we thought that coming up with a single score to put in the A-List would be confusing. Instead it ranks the overall game regardless of price. We'll also be swapping genres each month, so you'll be pleased to see that the sports games are back.

And to prove that we listen, we've also put the original review scores for games back in the In Perspective in reviews. Just remember though that a 90 per cent score from a couple of

Are games getting too realistic?

years back doesn't equate to a 90 per cent score today.

SELL-OUT
After a few years of buying computer games my collection is growing rather large, so much so that I think the time has come to have a clear-out. However, being a ruthless capitalist, I don't like the idea of just giving them away and would like to sell them. I've done a boot sale before but end up selling them for a pittance, because people expect to buy everything for about £3 or less.

Are there any places where I can take my PC games and sell them for a reasonable amount? Games such as *Half-Life* and *Age Of Empires* must be worth at least £8-12, even now. Do any of the computer stores buy second-hand games? I can't seem to find any.

Mark Gordon

To be brutally honest you're not going to get much for your games from a shop. The Computer Exchange in London offers anywhere from £3-£6 for new PC games, which then get marked up and put back on the shelves. Older games get laughed out of the store. And, unless you find a similar store in your area (and there aren't many around) you're going to find it difficult to find anyone willing to buy your games on the High Street.

I'd try www.ebay.co.uk, or another similar online auction
site, although you're still not guaranteed to get a great price. Them's the breaks.

FUTURE PERFECT
I've noticed that whenever you interview the big cheeses in the gaming world, they all speak of how they'd love to be able to develop and centre on both graphics and AI in games. Correct me if I'm wrong but aren't games supposed to be an escape from reality, a chance to do something you've always wanted to do but never been able to?

With the graphics industry moving at its current pace (take a look at *Unreal Tournament 2* and then look at *Half-Life* – there's a big difference) it won't be long before we start to see the first truly lifelike images. And with developers making true-to-life simulations (like *The Sims*), how long will it take for games to seamlessly blend into reality? And how many gamers are going to be unwilling to return to their normal, dull lives then?

Kind of a dark look on the future of games, eh?

Nial Giacomelli

A dark look to the future? It depends. I'm hoping that before I die someone will have developed VirtualKylie v1.0 and am happy to put myself forward now as a beta tester.

NAME-DROPPING
Firstly, how is it that all of you have such cool names? Did you
change your names before you became reviewers, *à la* Hollywood actors? Paul Presley, Dave Woods, James Lyon? Where are the Nevilles and the Gileses and the Melvins? Would you recommend a name change for me if I wanted to be a reviewer then?

You guys may not realise this, but the characters that make up the magazine are every bit as important as the content, and I would like to see a more in-depth section devoted to the members of the team. There could be specials when new members arrive and especially when members of the team are leaving. You can't go without telling us (sniff).

Keep up the always-top work guys (and girl).

Yohan Pathikirikorale

We've been accused of quite a lot of things in the past, but never of having cool names. Especially not from someone with a truly fantastical name like yourself.

WHO'S ROBBING WHO? #1
Your report on piracy was spot on – it costs 20p for a pirate to copy a game, yet they can sell them for £5 and they're still £30 cheaper than official releases. Games are getting more and more expensive for no good reason. In the past 12 months or so, the standard price for a new game has risen from £29.99 to £34.99, and *Castle Wolfenstein* costs even more. These are the games that are prime targets for copying, and in my opinion the publishers deserve everything that they get.

I say download the games off the Internet, but if you like them buy them when the price drops and put something back into the industry.

I'd gladly pay £20 for an official product rather than £5-10 to a dodgy geezer on a market stall. I would be happy knowing that my money was being ploughed back into the industry but the absurd profit levels of EA

Don't play games with criminals.

It will end in tears.

80% of people convicted of computer games piracy are involved in drugs, prostitution, theft or other crime.

That means that at least two prostitutes wrote to us this month.

MEDAL OF HONOR ALLIED ASSAULT
PC ZONE ISSUE 112 – 94%

We said..."A stunning and invigorating experience, easily the best FPS since *Half-Life* and, for us, a better all-round game"

STAR REVIEW

Judas. Dante has him in the lowest circle of hell. What did he do that was so bad? Sell out for cash? That's almost par for the course in our consumer economy. No, Judas is the arch-villain of history for his betrayal of a friend, and *MOHAA* is the software equivalent. Controversial? Let me explain... First, it lulls you with its charms: immersive gaming environments, fancy graphics, finely honed gameplay. Then it flatters you: you start believing you could have taken on the entire Axis forces by yourself. Before you know it, you think you're playing the best FPS ever.

But then you start getting the feeling that things are not quite right: the gameplay gets repetitive. Enemies respawn and jump out of brick walls and opponents spot you when you're hiding in the bushes in the dark. The suspicions build into a palpable unease, until the cheap, anti-climactic ending hits you. Your attempts to escape a burning building are consistently thwarted by a herd of enemy troops, backed up by nigh-invisible snipers. Run out and be shot, or stand still and be toast. Replay forever and ever. PS: I can't wait for the mission pack.

Brian Pickavance
VERDICT: 91%

I would like to express my deep disappointment with *MOH*. As far as I can tell, the only halfway decent mission is the beach landing, and even this has its limitations What's more, as it goes downhill, the game simply becomes a matter of trial and error, with each life spent getting 20 yards further to memorise sniper positions.

The controls are terrible and feel sluggish, and there appears to be invisible barriers in the game – didn't they have time to build a wall? Finally, the enemy AI is dreadful with the game consisting mainly of scripted events reducing the replayability of the game tremendously and ultimately leaving me feeling cheated out of £35.

There is no way on God's green earth that this game is better than *Half-Life* – please take more care in future.

John Donnelly
VERDICT: 77%

READER REVIEWS

▲ MEDAL OF HONOR ALLIED ASSAULT
PC ZONE ISSUE 112 – 94%

What the hell happened with *Medal Of Honor*? Up to and including the beach landing level, I was playing what has to be the best FPS in the world. Instant, varied action, multiple enemies, house-to-house fighting – all excellently balanced in terms of difficulty. Then it's like some idiot walked past the design team in the office and said: "Look out. Somebody might enjoy this. Turn it into a sniper game, only make it so that the Germans can always see you before you see them. That'll frustrate the shit out of them."

At present I'm stuck on the second of two levels set in a frozen landscape. I've got a sniper rifle but it's useless. All I can see are leaves and a mist that obscures my vision to about 20 feet. The Germans however don't seem to have this problem. They can see me far earlier without a telescopic scope than I can see them with one.

Other ludicrous scenarios in the second half of the game include a situation where you look out of a window using binoculars to target a tank for an airstrike. Meanwhile, someone comes up the stairs behind you to shoot you in the back. You change to your gun and shoot him. OK, fair enough, but ten times on the trot? It's like some kind of *Monty Python* sketch with queues of Germans on the stairs patiently waiting for you to look through your binoculars. You should have given this game two scores: 95 per cent for the first half and 70 per cent for the second half.

Paul Mattey
FIRST HALF: 95%
SECOND HALF: 70%

Medal Of Honor is not the best FPS ever, neither is it a *Castle Wolfenstein* beater. Having played both games back to back, and from getting my flatmates to do the same, we all came to the conclusion that although good, *MOH* is just not the definitive game I'd hoped it would be.

The game is weak on many counts. For one it's not really that difficult, and to make matters worse it's a very short game. The game also fails to go beyond the (admittedly exciting) Omaha beach escapades, and the missions often revolve around 'bomb something or other and stay alive' objectives, and simply change in setting. I also found that with each new mission the enemies seem to become 'an extra bullet harder to kill', which is a strange concept for a game that's purporting to show the realism of war.

I've also been left wondering how much of this game was tested before its release as bugs and glitches exist throughout – for example, it's possible to kill an enemy soldier and see his arm lying through the wall and his gun floating David Blaine-style in mid-air.

In my opinion, *Wolfenstein* has a far higher enjoyment factor, and is fantastic to play. It's also the first FPS I have played that has lived up to the heights of the original *Doom* games. Perhaps it's wrong to compare the two, but hey, everybody else has. If I had to recommend either of these, *RTCW* would win hands down, no arguments. May the backlash continue.

Ben Franklin
VERDICT: 82%

▼

A lot of people cheat at this game, but not everyone – some people are just that damn good.

and co would drop a little. After all, most games are expensive and rubbish.

Carl Briuners

WHO'S ROBBING WHO? #2
I found your article on piracy interesting and agree with your assertion that the reason piracy is rife is because of the discrepancy between manufacturing costs and the retail price. Development costs have increased with technology, but Michael Jackson spent a reported US$20m recording his latest album, yet you can buy the CD for little more than a tenner, so where's the argument there?

Developers cite piracy as a reason why prices have to increase, yet when the Sega Dreamcast was released with a GD-ROM drive, piracy became obsolete for a period but prices remained at £39.99. This argument is therefore rubbish. They charge us £35-45 because they can, but while they do, piracy will flourish and it is all the publishers' fault.

Furthermore, copy protections are constantly being employed by all developers, yet this prevents us from making back-up copies of our over-priced software, and if anything goes wrong, they want to charge us another £15+ for a replacement. It is gamers that are being taken advantage of.

David Owen

It's a controversial subject and we certainly don't advocate piracy, but it's obvious that current measures aren't working. Check out the second part of our feature on page 32 and the Hot Topic on the right.

MODS FOR SPODS
I'm writing to see if you'll write a 'Foolproof Guide to Mods.' I'm no simpleton, but I'm sure there are lots of people like me who see these mods reviewed and download them, only to find that we can't actually get them working. They either need to be patched, need pk3. files deleted/put somewhere/moved around, or something that requires some extensive forum trawling for an answer.

Many thanks and cheers for the best read since the days of Zzap! & Crash. Keep it up.

Maff72

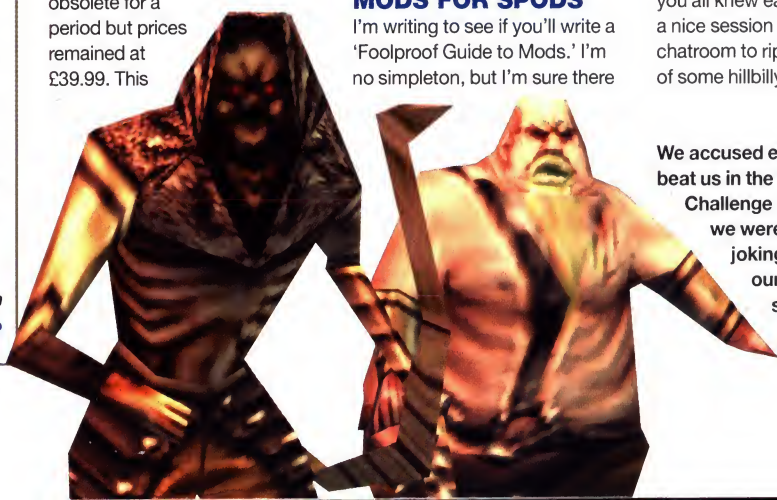**Keep an eye on The Guide in Extended Play over the next few months. You might be pleasantly surprised.**

I. AM. NOT. A. CHEAT.
OK, that's it. I've had it with moaning, little, pre-pubescent, spotty teenagers. I've just come off a well-known server and have gained the tally of 32 cheating accusations. Gamers are saying that cheaters are destroying the online gaming community, but so are improper accusations.

There's nothing worse than owning some snobby little lpb only to be greeted with "he's wall-hacking". I long for the days when you went on a server and you all knew each other and after a nice session you'd meet in a chatroom to rip the monkeys out of some hillbilly.

Trigga

We accused everyone who beat us in the Reader's Challenge of cheating but we were only joking/covering ourselves. We should have checked out the first part

"The reason piracy is so rife is because of the discrepency between manufacturing costs and the retail price"

DAVID OWEN

of Wandy's guide to spotting a cheat online (page 120) first.

DVD?

I've been a subscriber for two years and literally jumped for joy when I heard you were going to be producing a DVD version of the magazine. Trouble is, I wasn't given the chance to switch my subscription and when the new issue landed it had the usual two CDs stuck to the front. So what's up? Can I switch to the DVD edition? I don't see why I should be punished for subscribing. Can you do something about this?

Mark Southern

We've had a few letters about this. Most of you should have had an insert giving you the option to upgrade. If not, ring the Subscriptions Hotline who'll sort you out You can get them on 01454 642 497. PZ

STAR LETTER

WARRIOR SINS

Martin, Martin, Martin... What brilliant writing (if a little disturbed) in your review of *Warrior Kings*. Somehow you always make me laugh (and it's not just 'cos of the photo). I agreed with many of the things you said, and it is very good but there are just too many glitches for it to be Classic material. I only make that judgement on the back of *PC ZONE*'s own high standards... Maybe the patched version (if we're lucky) would be worthy?

For a game that's taken so long, the problems make it feel like a bit of a rushed job. For example: the AI is rubbish – why do RTS enemies always attack in a long, straight line, wading like lemmings into the oncoming barrage of arrows? The 'tenuous' path-finding you mentioned is, in fact, rubbish. Yet units can magically walk through buildings and each other – spooky, huh? The music is terribly implemented and the sound effects are patchy. I hovered low over 25 galloping knights who must have had magical silencers on their horses' hooves, 'cos I couldn't hear a thing. Suddenly the sounds of nearby combat attacked my ears and I looked desperately for the cause, which turned out to be a lone archer on the far side of the map. You what?

The tutorials are also rubbish. The developers need look no further than *Black & White* to see how these should be done.

All too often a review in *PC ZONE* (correctly) summarises a game as 'full of great ideas, but just not quite there'. These games all get 80-something per cent and a comment that 'if only they'd nailed the problem with [whatever] it could have been a Classic...'

Warrior Kings should have been one of them.

Tim Lambert

You've made plenty of good points Tim, and believe me, I agonised long and hard about whether or not I should award *Warrior Kings* a Classic award. Sometimes, a game comes along which is brave enough to try something totally different, and in doing so, manages to break the mould of a stagnant genre. In my opinion, *Warrior Kings* does just that and its ambition shines through to provide a truly superb experience. OK, it's got a few glitches, but if we're honest, we'd be hard-pressed to find a game these days that doesn't.

▲ LAST ISSUE STUART CAMPBELL ATTEMPTED TO PUT THE RECORD STRAIGHT ABOUT PIRACY. IT'S A SUBJECT EVERYONE HAS AN OPINION ON AND THE FORUM WAS BUZZING WHEN WE POSTED THE HOT TOPIC. HERE ARE SOME OF THE BEST RESPONSES.

WHAT WE SAID:
"Let's try to be brief with this. Everything about piracy boils down to the price of games. The truth is, games are pirated so much because the gap between their physical cost and their actual cost is so huge. When something costs 40p to physically manufacture and sells at £40, the scope for the unscrupulous to come in and undercut the retail version with a cheap but identical copy is massive."

WHAT YOU SAID:
The answer to piracy is simple – just lower the price of games. Like you said, people don't copy books that cost under a fiver. And I'm sure that if all CDs were £8.99, like they are on the Internet, people wouldn't copy them as much either.

Tom Raffe

I would never get a pirated game – I want the quality and excitement I get from opening a new game. Trouble is, it's so widespread now it's become part of the gaming culture, and as it's so easy to do it will always be around, even if ELSPA put up slogans saying 'Pirates Will Kill Your Parents'. It comes down to personal choice in the end – I choose not to get pirated software because it wouldn't be the same as getting a brand-spanking new game.

Righteous_Fury

You have to remember that the developers have other costs to think about other than just the 40p production price of the CD. Huge mark-ups are reasonable when put in context. If software piracy continues I believe that we will eventually see developers disappearing due to huge debts. *Metal Gear Solid 2* has cost around £70m to produce. Can you imagine how many copies they need to sell to ensure a profit?

Biscuit2k

Yeah, I guess if the industry continues to be undermined then fewer developers will take the risk of creating new games. They have specific profit margins to reach, so why risk going for an original game when you can release another *Tomb Raider*/*FIFA* clone and rake in the cash.

Righteous_fury

It's there, so people will take it. It's the same if you saw a fiver lying in the street. Would you take it and keep it? I admit I've copied games and many people haven't bought a game in years, just because they're too expensive. OK, the 40p estimate is a little over the top but it's on the right track. Games could be sold at £20 and the companies would still make a massive profit.

Fallen_Angel

COME AND 'AVE A GO

Every month, there will be a new Hot Topic on the *PC ZONE* Website. Check out www.pczone.co.uk, join in the arguments, entertain us or say something intelligent and get yourself in the magazine. The best contribution gets a game from the current top ten. Next month: can the PC compete with consoles when it comes to arcade games?

Piracy will kill off developers and the games industry? Ahem... [censored]. Piracy has been around almost since games started being produced and have we seen any decline in the games industry? What everyone seems to forget is that not only do you have to fork out 40 quid for a new game, most people have to think about upgrading their PC just to play it. Anyway, if you record a program off of the TV that's akin to piracy. How many of you have video recorders?

SgtDave

I'm glad the feature in the mag has cleared a few things up. I've bought a few copied games in the past. I don't sell them on to anyone and they are just for me to play. I only get them because they are the US versions and I can get them a few weeks before they hit the UK. Once the UK version is released I buy it, as I believe that developers should get paid for their work.

TomR

WINNER!

When I was a kid playing on my Atari ST/Amiga I pirated software, games mainly. I had quite a few of them, but I did it for one reason. It wasn't to be rebellious, I just couldn't afford the prices they were asking. I was 13 years old, I had no money and my family wasn't rich. When I started working I bought my first game and I'll never pirate software again.

I do feel prices are too high for what companies are offering. But even if they bring their prices down, people will still pirate software. It makes them feel above the law and that they are doing the right thing for those who can't afford it.

Bunngod

Piracy is an ongoing battle but the same old argument pops up every time: the cost of software. Everywhere, there will be discussions, arguments and questions about who can get *MGS2* for £10, how you burn a disc, my mate can get... It doesn't matter how strict the law is, what should be done is to set a limit as to what should be charged for software. Everything is all about making a profit these days, even the people who pirate games are making a profit.

original_aceman

PC ZONE SAYS:
Make sure you check out the second and final part of Stuart Campbell's feature on piracy, starting on page 28.

THE PCZONE A-LIST

◄ SHOOTERS ►

MEDAL OF HONOR

It may have taken years but finally there's a shooter worthy of toppling *Half-Life*. Brilliant level design, surprisingly good AI, an unparalleled sense of atmosphere and intensity, not to mention beautifully scripted scenes. It's also the first game that Richie has finished three times in as many months, and the first FPS Rhianna has finished in her life, which gives you some indication of the game's worth.
PUB EA **DEV** 2015
PCZ ISSUE 112
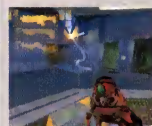
HALF-LIFE: GENERATIONS
Unchallenged for three years, *Half-Life* redefined its genre with a cracking atmosphere and a compelling plot. It now comes bundled with the excellent *Opposing Force* add-on pack and the world's favourite mod, *Counter-Strike*.
PUB Vivendi **DEV** Valve Software · · · · **PCZ ISSUE 71**

ALIENS VS PREDATOR 2
If we rated games on atmosphere and tension *AvP2* would've been the highest-scoring game ever. The multiplayer game and 3D engine brought the score down, but for scares nothing can touch this three-way fragfest.
PUB Vivendi **DEV** Monolith · · · · **PCZ ISSUE 110**

MAX PAYNE
It's not big and it's not clever, but for style and content *Max Payne* receives top marks. The character animations and soon-to-be-copied-by-everyone Bullet Time mode are the real stars, it's just a shame it only lasts a few hours.
PUB Take 2 **DEV** Remedy · · · · **PCZ ISSUE 107**

RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN
A mixed bag. Visually it might be at the top of the pile, but the single-player game has been completely eclipsed by *Medal Of Honor*. Forget that and head for the multiplayer action instead, where the game comes into its own.
PUB Activision **DEV** Gray Matter/Nerve · · · · **PCZ ISSUE 112**
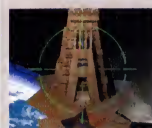
UNREAL TOURNAMENT
Unreal Tournament's multiplayer mode is more than a match for *Quake III*, with a combination of well-designed maps and diverse gameplay. Single-player mode is a tad short, but it's still more of a challenge than most.
PUB Infogrames **DEV** Epic/Digital Extremes · · · · **PCZ ISSUE 81**

QUAKE III ARENA
Still going strong with a constant stream of mods and add-ons, *Quake III* is probably the best game for pure deathmatch multiplayer, but in terms of numbers it's trounced online by *Half-Life* and *Counter-Strike*.
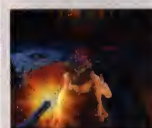**PUB** Activision **DEV** id · · · · **PCZ ISSUE 87**

SERIOUS SAM: THE SECOND ENCOUNTER
This time around the game is bigger, longer and the graphics are even better than before. Not a serious challenge to the FPS crown, but for *Doom*-style retro action with a brilliant new engine, this can't be beat.
PUB Take 2 **DEV** Croteam · · · · **PCZ ISSUE 112**

CLIVE BARKER'S UNDYING
This atmospheric shooter is one of the most unsettling we've seen and the superb graphics and sound will have you jumping like a little girl. A game that pushes the boundaries of narrative gameplay.
PUB EA **DEV** EALA · · · · **PCZ ISSUE 101**

TRIBES 2
If you're after quality co-operative action in expansive outdoor environments with superb visuals and smooth play, there's no better place to go than online with *Tribes 2*. If you're not much of a team player then steer clear.
PUB Vivendi **DEV** Dynamix · · · · **PCZ ISSUE 103**

◄ STRATEGY ►

SHOGUN: WARLORDS

Take command of enormous armies, engage in epic and bloody battles, send ninjas to assassinate generals and conquer your way through feudal Japan. This edition further improves the game's capable 3D engine, gives you greater customisation over your units and also lets you play as the Mongols. Copious in-game options never get in the way of the instant playability. *Shogun* will blow you away.
PUB EA **DEV** Creative Assembly
PCZ ISSUE 89

NEW ENTRY WARRIOR KINGS
A visually stunning and hugely ambitious RTS that melds the strategic diversity of *Battle Realms* with the huge 3D rolling landscapes of *Shogun*. With a compelling story to boot, no strategy fan should be without a copy.
PUB Microids **DEV** Black Cactus · · · · **PCZ ISSUE 114**

COMMANDOS 2
There have been a few imitators of the squad-based strategy of *Commandos* but none have come close to this sequel. If, like us, you loved the first game, you'll love this massive, preposterously detailed follow-up even more.
PUB Eidos **DEV** Pyro Studio · · · · **PCZ ISSUE 108**

COSSACKS: EUROPEAN WARS
There are 8000 troops at your disposal in this historically accurate RTS. Smooth unit movement, a 3D landscape with real physics modelling and great graphics and sound make it truly absorbing. An essential purchase.
PUB CDV **DEV** GSC Gameworld · · · · **PCZ ISSUE 101**

Z: STEEL SOLDIERS
Z will re-ignite your passion for strategy games with its fast-paced in-yer-face action that allows you to get down and dirty from the off. The AI is superb, and as it's entirely mouse-driven, it's simple and easy to get into.
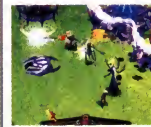**PUB** EON **DEV** Bitmap Brothers · · · · **PCZ ISSUE 101**

ETHERLORDS
This unexpected gem might just be good enough to convert those who immediately associate 'turn-based' with the word 'geek'. The visuals and sound are stunning, the tactical variety truly staggering – fantastic stuff.
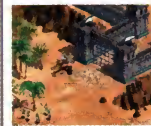**PUB** JoWood **DEV** Nival Interactive · · · · **PCZ ISSUE 112**

BATTLE REALMS
Emerging from the quagmire of all too similar RTS games this is a genuinely ground-breaking strategy game. It does have its flaws which include a tedious plot, but the great use of sound, visuals and gameplay shine through.
PUB Ubi Soft **DEV** Liquid Entertainment · · · · **PCZ ISSUE 111**

AOEII: GOLD EDITION
It might not be radically different from the original, but sometimes evolution is just as good as revolution. In *AOEII* the gameplay is honed to perfection with balanced units and strong single and multiplayer campaigns. A great RTS.
PUB Microsoft **DEV** Ensemble Studios · · · · **PCZ ISSUE 84**

SUDDEN STRIKE
Sudden Strike mixes WWII action with a heavy dose of realism in order to create a compelling strategy title. Its large-scale battles, huge selection of units and superb interface make it a must for RTS fans.
PUB CDV **DEV** Fireglow · · · · **PCZ ISSUE 96**

SHATTERED GALAXY
This hugely involving online game combines a monthly *EverQuest*-style subscription-based role-playing experience with massive *Total Annihilation*-influenced combat. Only available from the States, but well worth the price.
PUB www.sgalaxy.com **DEV** Nexon · · · · **PCZ ISSUE 108**

Welcome to the all-new *PC ZONE* A-List, the definitive buyer's guide for all discerning PC gamers. The games that grace these pages aren't just good, they're the best of the best in their respective genres, and our list is continually updated to show how each game stands in relation to its peers. Get in.

◄ ROLE-PLAYING GAMES ►

DEUS EX

Warren Spector is one of the true visionaries of the computer game medium, and this is his opus. Combining the finer elements of *Half-Life*, *System Shock 2* and *Thief*, *Deus Ex* is an RPG of complex beauty and a true revolution in computer gaming. The fascinating sci-fi plot and amazing attention to detail, combined with unparalleled player freedom are just some of the reasons why *Deus Ex* is a landmark in gaming.
PUB Eidos **DEV** Ion Storm
PCZ ISSUE 93

PLANESCAPE: TORMENT
An incredible game from Black Isle, using the *Baldur's Gate* engine. With a compelling story, well-scripted dialogue and the best character development we've seen in any game of its kind, this is a dark, adult scorcher of an RPG.
PUB Interplay **DEV** Black Isle Studio **PCZ ISSUE 87**

NEW ENTRY DUNGEON SIEGE
Graphically brilliant, massively enjoyable and highly immersive, *Dungeon Siege* is one of the best RPGs to date and only misses out on a Classic because of the shortcomings in the narrative.
PUB Microsoft **DEV** Gas Powered Games **PCZ ISSUE 115**

SYSTEM SHOCK 2
Definitely one of the most original and disturbing games to hit the PC, *System Shock 2* manages to successfully mix the genres of role-playing, action and adventure into one. Play it with the lights off if you're hard enough.
PUB EA **DEV** Irrational Games **PCZ ISSUE 80**

DARK AGE OF CAMELOT
With some of the best graphics seen in an MMORPG, *Dark Age Of Camelot* creates an atmospheric, engaging and open-ended world. The scale of battles alone should ensure it remains above *EverQuest* for a good few months.
PUB Koch Media **DEV** Mythic Entertainment **PCZ ISSUE112**

BALDUR'S GATE II
The original *Baldur's Gate* was hailed as one of the best story-driven role-playing games ever. The sequel isn't vastly different, but it's bigger, better and still extremely addictive. An essential for anyone interested in PC role-playing.
PUB Interplay **DEV** Bioware **PCZ ISSUE 96**

THRONE OF DARKNESS
An enjoyable party-based strategic hack 'n' slash from the developers of *Diablo* sees you take command of seven samurai as they fight their way through feudal Japan. Not for everyone, granted, but worth a look.
PUB Vivendi **DEV** Click Entertainment **PCZ ISSUE 96**
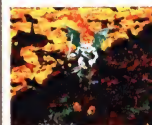
DIABLO II
The sequel to the definitive hack 'n' slash took all the qualities of the original into a massive world of beautifully simplistic yet compelling gameplay. With a huge online community and an excellent expansion, *DII* is as addictive as ever.
PUB VU Games **DEV** Blizzard **PCZ ISSUE 84**

EVERQUEST
Probably the most notorious of all online RPGs, *EverQuest* has gone from strength to strength with a total of three expansion packs. A beautiful if repetitive game that has claimed the souls of thousands worldwide.
PUB Ubi Soft **DEV** Verant **PCZ ISSUE 80**

ARCANUM
Whether you play through as a mage or a techy, you'll still find *Arcanum* hugely entertaining. Don't let its looks fool you, it's got a great plot and pleasingly flexible character development. May be too hardcore for some.
**PUB** VU Games **DEV** Troika Games **PCZ ISSUE 107**

◄ ACTION/ADVENTURE ►

GRIM FANDANGO

If you've followed the successes of LucasArts from the early days of *Monkey Island*, *Sam & Max* and *Day Of The Tentacle*, this is a must-buy. The comic interaction between Manny and Glottis is a high watermark for scripting in games, while sublime graphics and laugh-out-loud humour ensure it's at the top of its genre. A word of warning though: it's bloody hard and if your mind doesn't work laterally you'll be playing it until the day you die.
PUB Activision **DEV** LucasArts
PCZ ISSUE 71
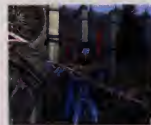
SOUL REAVER 2
While this latest episode in the saga of Raziel takes few risks with the action/adventure formula, it's a consummately constructed example of the genre, with a compelling storyline, satisfying combat and excellent puzzle dynamics.
PUB Eidos **DEV** Crystal Dynamics **PCZ ISSUE 111**

DISCWORLD NOIR
Although the point-and-click adventure game is dying, *Discworld Noir* is still very much alive. It's darker in style than previous *Discworld* games and all the better for it in our opinion.
PUB Infogrames **DEV** Perfect Entertainment **PCZ ISSUE 79**

SEVERANCE: BLADE OF DARKNESS
Anyone who doesn't mind being splattered with the kind of gore rarely seen outside *Soldier of Fortune* will find much to like in *Severance*. But it stands out from the usual hack 'n' slasher with its amazing engine and combo system.
PUB Codemasters **DEV** Rebel Act Studios **PCZ ISSUE 98**

THE NOMAD SOUL
Distinctly odd, but original nonetheless. *The Nomad Soul* is a huge intricate world populated by lap dancers and David Bowie. At turns adventure, beat 'em up and platformer, it's insanely ambitious and almost pulls it off.
PUB Eidos **DEV** Quantic Dream **PCZ ISSUE 83**

HITMAN: CODENAME 47
Reminiscent of *Leon* and *Day of the Jackal*, *Hitman* recreates the excitement of carrying out a contract killing. Snipe from rooftops, disguise yourself in your victims' uniforms and walk away from explosions with calm elegance.
PUB Eidos **DEV** IO Interactive **PCZ ISSUE 98**

PROJECT EDEN
Giving you control of four variously skilled operatives in a nightmarish future metropolis, *Eden* is at once predictable and innovative. The combat and AI may be dull, but the varied puzzles and raft of cool gadgetry make up for it.
PUB Eidos **DEV** Core Design **PCZ ISSUE 107**

INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE
LucasArts moves away from the point-and-click genre and into *Tomb Raider* territory for its latest Indy game, but with many of the adventure elements still in place. The result is surprisingly good, but not for traditionalists.
PUB Activision **DEV** LucasArts **PCZ ISSUE 84**

ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND
One of the hardest things to do in a game is to make your audience laugh with you rather than at you, and *Escape From Monkey Island* is undoubtedly one of the most genuinely funny games to come out in recent years.
PUB Activision **DEV** LucasArts **PCZ ISSUE 98**

METAL GEAR SOLID
Although it's been ported pretty much identically from the console version (with a few graphical improvements), *MGS*'s tense gameplay, well-designed levels and variety of challenging bosses make it a thing of beauty.
PUB Microsoft **DEV** Konami **PCZ ISSUE 96**

◀ GOD GAMES ▶

BLACK & WHITE

Although it had its critics we still stand by our original verdict. Peter Molyneux's vision is pure and the design of the game both breaks boundaries and serves as a blueprint for the future. The add-on *Creature Isle* is also available, which cuts down on micro-management and lets you guide your creature through a variety of mini-games. Overall we think it's pure genius in a box.
PUB EA **DEV** Lionhead Studios
PCZ ISSUE 100

CIVILIZATION III
Civilization III sticks to the same compulsive gameplay that made the first two games so popular. Die-hard *Civ* fans will relish the improved visuals and animation, while the new user-friendly interface makes the game accessible to the first-timer. Brings to mind the maxim 'if it ain't broke…'
PUB Infogrames **DEV** Firaxis Games
PCZ ISSUE 111

THE SIMS
Revolutionary at birth, the concept has since been diluted through numerous add-ons and an unhealthily long stay in the charts. It's now little more than a cash cow for Electronic Arts, but you can't help but admire the strength of community and the fact that it's still selling by the bucketload.
PUB EA **DEV** Maxis/EA
PCZ ISSUE 87

CAESAR III
Starting from scratch, you've got to build a majestic Roman city and ensure a harmonious life for your citizens by balancing their work, health and entertainment needs. So what? So it's probably one of the most utterly absorbing and addictive god sims in existence. Hail Caesar.
PUB VU Games **DEV** Impressions
PCZ ISSUE 70

SIMCITY 3000
Ten years on, the offspring of the original building game *Sim City* still remains as addictive as it ever was. Little was broken, and little was fixed. With new buildings and an enhanced transport system, *SimCity 3000* is a must for old-timers and new addicts alike.
PUB EA **DEV** Maxis
PCZ ISSUE 74

ZEUS: MASTER OF OLYMPUS
Straight from the creators of *Pharaoh* and *Caesar III* comes this intricate yet hugely playable micro-management god game. Despite its slightly cartoonish look *Zeus* is highly addictive, but suffers slightly from its lack of multiplayer options and an undeveloped combat system.
PUB VU Games **DEV** Impressions Games
PCZ ISSUE 97

ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON
Design and build your own theme park and then pack it full of the most fiendish rides your imagination can conjure up, while trying to keep the cash and the punters coming in. From rickety wooden dippers to Nemesis-style, white-knuckle gurners, *RollerCoaster Tycoon* is hugely addictive. Be warned.
PUB Infogrames **DEV** Chris Sawyer
PCZ ISSUE 75

MONOPOLY TYCOON
This mixture of the classic board game and a *Theme Park/SimCity*-style building sim is an admirable attempt at something a little different. Played in real time, the aim is to make as much money as possible. Great fun for a while, but it quickly becomes repetitive.
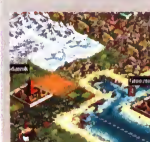**PUB** Infogrames **DEV** Deep Red
PCZ ISSUE 110
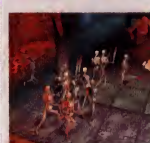
DUNGEON KEEPER 2
The ultimate 'it's good to be bad' game, *Dungeon Keeper* was a great idea and *DK2* takes the essence and humour of the original, corrects all the mistakes, vastly improves the graphics, and adds a myriad of new features that build wisely on the original concept.
PUB EA **DEV** Bullfrog
PCZ ISSUE 79

CALL TO POWER II
It might not have the official endorsement, but *Call To Power II* is a spiritual successor to one of the greatest strategy games of all time, *Civilization II*. The gameplay is familiar but every element has been polished and the result is a hugely challenging and rewarding experience. Still well worth seeking out.
PUB Activision **DEV** Activision
PCZ ISSUE 98

◀ 3D ACTION / STRATEGY ▶

OPERATION FLASHPOINT GOLD

Now available with the tricky Red Hammer add-on, *Flashpoint* has become to tactical action what *Half-Life* was to shooters. Fight on foot or in tanks, fly planes or even direct an entire platoon, this game is total war – in your face and on a massive scale. The graphics are an acquired taste, but they convey a sense of wide-open warfare perfectly. It's the ultimate military simulation, with a stunning atmosphere and superb missions.
PUB Codemasters **DEV** Bohemia Interactive
PCZ ISSUE 104

GHOST RECON
A superb squad-based shooter, which masterfully combines tactics and action. The levels range from wide-open landscapes to claustrophobic city streets, in what is a stunning evocation of special forces warfare.
PUB Ubi Soft **DEV** Red Storm Entertainment
PCZ ISSUE 110

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS
Looking old and with most of the original bugs intact, *Hidden & Dangerous* is still a great WWII game featuring some incredibly varied levels and a stirring soundtrack. Look out for the supposedly bug-free Deluxe release next issue.
PUB Take 2 **DEV** Illusion Softworks
PCZ ISSUE 79

HOSTILE WATERS
A brilliant RTS/action game you can play purely strategically or up close and personal. Inspired by the 16-bit classic *Carrier Command*, it's just a shame there aren't any multiplayer options.
PUB Rage **DEV** Rage Software
PCZ ISSUE 101

GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO
This mammoth and original 3D action/strategy game includes RTS, RPG, real-time and third-person-shooter combat elements. It's also rather funny and features near-naked women with blue skin.
PUB Interplay **DEV** Planet Moon Studios
PCZ ISSUE 95

◀ RACING GAMES ▶

COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2.0

Despite the plucky challenge from *Rally Championship Xtreme*, *Colin McRae Rally 2.0* is still the benchmark rally title and looks set to remain so until *Colin McRae 3.0* turns up later in the year. The graphics are fantastic, the detail is overwhelming and the cars handle beautifully. If you're on the look-out for the definitive rally game, this is it – and it's cheap now as well.
PUB Codemasters **DEV** Codemasters
PCZ ISSUE 98

RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP XTREME
This equals *Colin McRae Rally 2.0* as the top PC driving game, but the fact that it costs three times as much means it doesn't quite claim the top spot. It plays beautifully and even comes with online options. An essential rally game.
PUB Actualize **DEV** Actualize
PCZ ISSUE 110

MIDTOWN MADNESS 2
Buckle up for some high-speed action as you race around London and San Francisco. The original *MM* was a belter, but with improved cars, races and controls, this is even better. We reckon it's the definitive arcade racer.
PUB Microsoft **DEV** Angel Studios
PCZ ISSUE 96

F1 2001
The most versatile *F1* game to date, with a full-on sim mode and an arcade setting for those who can't hack it. It looks great, but it comes with a huge caveat – if you want to see it as intended you're going to need a hefty machine.
PUB EA **DEV** EA Sport
PCZ ISSUE 109

BALLISTICS
So you thought *WipEout* was fast? Well, welcome to a new concept in pure racing. It only has seven tracks, but *Ballistics* has unparalleled speed, with a simple control system that keeps the emphasis on racing dynamics.
PUB Xicat **DEV** GRIN
PCZ ISSUE 111

IL-2 STURMOVIK

Combining incredible atmosphere, sound and visuals with possibly the most realistic flight model to date, *IL-2* puts you behind the flight stick of a number of stunningly reproduced WWII combat planes. The attention to detail is breathtaking and the easy-to-use editor allows endless months of replayability. A must-have for any real combat flight sim fanatic.
PUB Ubi Soft **DEV** 1C: Maddox Games

PCZ ISSUE 110

MS FLIGHT SIM 2002

With more polish than previous versions, this professional edition offers players more planes, extra flight loggings and improved graphics. It might not be able to teach you how to fly, but it's the closest you'll get without paying for lessons.
PUB Microsoft **DEV** BAO   **PCZ ISSUE 111**

BATTLE OF BRITAIN

Allow yourself to be immersed in one of the most exciting and realistic combat flight sims around. The action is non-stop, the skies are crowded and the flight models actually feel 'right'. Tally ho!
PUB Empire Interactive **DEV** Rowan Software   **PCZ ISSUE 103**

FALCON 4

We waited patiently for years for this title to arrive, and the good news is that, for once, we weren't disappointed. *Falcon 4* features incredible 3D-accelerated graphics and a dynamic campaign structure.
PUB Infogrames **DEV** Microprose   **PCZ ISSUE 72**

B-17: THE MIGHTY 8TH

B-17 reproduces the experience of piloting a World War II bomber. Just about everything is covered, from planning missions to dropping bombs. A must for WWII and realism freaks everywhere.
PUB Infogrames **DEV** Wayward Simulations   **PCZ ISSUE 96**

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER: 01/02

Another year, another update and yet another improvement on the greatest sports management game of all time, one which will literally consume your life. New features this time around include masked attributes (forcing you to scout for talent), updated team and player stats, and all of the new rules and regulations imposed by FIFA for the new season. Pure genius.
PUB Eidos **DEV** Sports Interactive

PCZ ISSUE 108

VIRTUA TENNIS

Who would have believed that this console favourite would translate so well to the PC? Its control interface is supremely intuitive, while the AI is massively challenging. Best of all, though, is its truly sublime multiplayer options.
PUB Empire Interactive **DEV** Rowan Software   **PCZ ISSUE 114**

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2

Another console game that has stormed its way to success on the PC. The speed, balance and feel of the game are uncannily realistic, while the diversity of moves, combos and circuits will keep you playing for months on end.
PUB Activision **DEV** Neversoft Entertainment   **PCZ ISSUE 98**

VIRTUAL POOL 3

Easily the best cue-based game around, *VP3* features some near perfect physics and excellent graphics. The career and multiplayer modes are highly entertaining, and a superb tutorial will have you clearing up in no time.
PUB Interplay **DEV** Celeris   **PCZ ISSUE 99**

FIFA 2002

Still the best PC football game despite some irksome flaws, this graphically improved update introduces nuances such as through-ball and one-two options which provide greater variation but less passing accuracy.
PUB Electronic Arts **DEV** EA Sports   **PCZ ISSUE 110**

OLD-TIMER PHIL WAND TURNS BACK THE CLOCK A QUARTER OF A CENTURY AND RECALLS ALL THE GAMES THAT MADE HIM GO MMMMMMM.
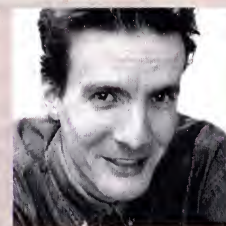
SPACE WARS (ARCADE)

This is actually the first graphic, animated computer game, lashed together by MIT geeks in 1961. Although I wasn't around back then, I was eight when Cinematronics released the arcade version in 1977, and to someone of single digits the game was stunning. I've been on the lookout for someone selling a cabinet ever since.

CHAOS (ZX SPECTRUM)

Famous for the *X-Com* series and for *Magic & Mayhem*, Julian Gollop also developed *Chaos* for the ZX Spectrum back in 1984. Eight wizards cast spells, throw lightning bolts and set weird creatures loose on one another. The artificial intelligence was bogglingly good, considering the whole game weighed in at just 48K.

ELITE (BBC B)

Also written in 1984 but for the 32K BBC Microcomputer, *Elite* made Ian Bell and David Braben famous in every household with teenagers. It hasn't aged as well as *Chaos*, but anyone who played it remembers the rank they made and which trading routes made them money. I'm still scared of Thargoids.

SATELLITE WARRIOR (CPC 464)

A year after *Elite*, DM Lock wrote *Satellite Warrior* for the 64K Amstrad; it went on to become responsible for my distinctly average O-level results. Two players go head-to-head on the same keyboard, bidding for engines, lasers and shields and constructing spacecraft to colonise planets. Simple, fun, and hopelessly addictive.

STEEL EMPIRE (AMIGA)

In 1992, Silicon Knights released a multiplayer 2D Mech blast that presented a Risk-style view of an alien land divided into territories. The game blended strategy with pupil-shrinking arcade action, and was one of the decade's most underrated titles. Download it from www.theunderdogs.org and keep in mind the fact that it's ten years old.

FORMULA ONE GRAND PRIX II (PC)

Geoff Crammond is remembered for *Revs* and *Sentinel* on the BBC – the latter is wonderfully addictive even today. I believe *F1GP2* to be his finest hour, in that it delivered so much more than anyone ever expected. Top graphics, great crashes and multiplayer options made it rather habit-forming.

DOOM (PC)

It was tough choosing between *Doom* and *Duke Nukem*, but in the end everyone's favourite space marine won through. I remember spending many happy midnights fragging bad guys with three friends over a 10BASE-T network, with the game's unique co-op mode making the experience all the more satisfying. Happy days indeed.

TOTAL ANNIHILATION (PC)

The world's finest real-time strategy game for three reasons. One, anyone can play and enjoy it. Two, it has every multiplayer option imaginable. Three, it's a total blast, far more so than *Red Alert*. Cavedog's masterpiece still feels fresh as a daisy and provides hours of non-stop, top-down, polygon mayhem.

TEAM FORTRESS (PC)

I've been playing *TFC* since its release for *Half-Life*. The game is all things to all people, deathmatch and team players alike. Nine classes and map variations make no two games the same. It's a shame it gets bad-mouthed by *Counter-Strike* nerds who lack the dexterity to get the best from it.

GRAND THEFT AUTO 3 (PSX)

I feel something of a turncoat choosing a console game as my latest blockbuster, but *GTA3* is the world's most perfect arcade game. It is everything you ever wanted from a driving game, a strategy game and an action game all rolled into one. It's even a hoot watching other people play it.

RETRO ZONE
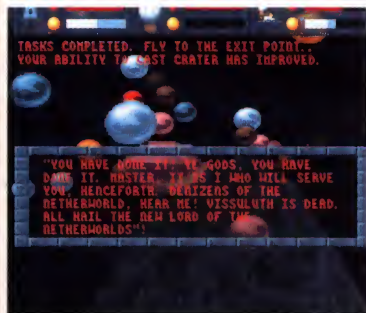

Caption: One head each then?

MAGIC CARPET 2

Was Bullfrog flying high or hanging by a thread?

"It controlled like a coked-up humming bird in an earthquake"

RESPONSE TO the first *Magic Carpet* had pretty much been unanimous – everybody loved it. Ground-breaking graphics (literally, you could morph the terrain), a novel setting, the classic mana-equals-power gameplay that Molyneux and co. were famed for. How could it fail? And more importantly: how could Electronic Arts resist commissioning a sequel? Answer, they couldn't.

The 3D engine had the obligatory overhaul (and the 3D glasses and bizarre stereogram 'Magic Picture' modes were removed saving parents across the country huge optician bills) and came back looking like a million dollars. The storyline was beefed up and gave the game some sort of purpose. The monsters were made all the more terrifying and the night-time mode added to the atmosphere. In short, brilliant.

Except that it still controlled like a coked-up humming bird in an earthquake. Plus it was too easy (despite the controls). As with most things from the Molyneux-era Bullfrog, *MC2* was one of those fine ideas in search of longer-lasting gameplay. Still, *MC2* reaped almost as much praise and gaming industry awards as its predecessor, Molyneux's reputation as a guru of game design was affirmed and six years later we got *Black & White*.

Caption: Balls to that.

Caption: Those aren't carpets.
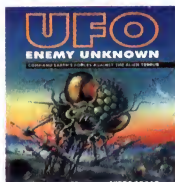

Caption: Magic, from a carpet.

NEWS

GAMING NEWS FROM NOVEMBER 1995

Virtual Reality was still inflicting its unwanted presence on the nation, this time infiltrating your own homes with commercially available VR headsets. The VFX1 Headgear System was both over-priced and over and done with before anyone could even blink. Not that anyone could blink much since the headsets weighed a ton and using them for more than ten minutes would make your eyes feel like jelly.

The Official World *Doom* Deathmatch Championship took place at Microsoft's HQ in Seattle, with the UK well represented by a *PC ZONE*-sponsored national champion. We went, we saw, we didn't conquer. But the names Sujoy, Thresh and, naturally, Macca become household names overnight.

Celebrities paying the rent by appearing in games this month include: Mark Hamill, Michael Dorn, John Sessions and, er, Dani Behr.

THE BEST OF THE REST →

Crime Patrol
(PC)
One of the first lightgun games to appear on the PC, *Crime Patrol* was basically a series of video clips with people pointing guns at you. Interspersed with half-naked strippers for some reason. Who you shot at. American, naturally.

Destruction Derby
(PlayStation)
Car smashes equal great games. Universal truth. The PlayStation console benefited greatly from this simulation of vehicular carnage. Not much else in the way of gameplay to be honest, but it was a great stress reliever.
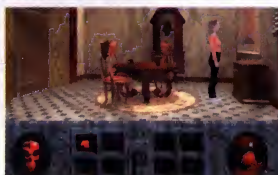
Phantasmagoria
(PC)
After countless cutie fests (*Kings Quests*, *Police Quests*, *Space Quests* etc), Sierra turned to the dark side with this gory horror adventure. Ex-*ZONE* editor Chris Anderson became obsessed by it, everyone else just shrugged.

Worms
(PC)
Like you don't know. *Worms* took all that was great about the *Lemmings* series (namely cute, cartoony animals) and gave them guns. Addictive as crack, the series has just continued to grow, the latest being *Worms Blast*.

GAMES THAT CHANGED THE WORLD
X-COM

It came out of nowhere. No fanfare of trumpets, no back-door bribing of the games press to secure big reviews – there wasn't even a decent press release accompanying the packaging. *Chris Anderson* **looks back on the game that rocked the strategy world to its very foundations**

GAME Enemy Unknown (aka X-Com: UFO Defense)
DEVELOPER Mythos Games
RELEASED July 1994
**INFLUENCED** It didn't change the gaming world, but it changed the people that played it

I CAN REMEMBER the phone call from Laurence Scotford (who was editor of *PC ZONE* at the time). He asked me if I wanted to take a look at *UFO: Enemy Unknown*. "It seems to be similar to *Laser Squad*," he told me. "Sure," I said, "bung it in the post and I'll take a look." The deal was done. It arrived the next day, I installed it and was immediately struck by the apparent complexity of it. This, I decided, was not a good thing. It was going to take me a while to get through this one. The manual was a pretty scary proposition with all kinds of tactical combat instructions and resource management dos and don'ts.

The famous Geoscape screen was where you established bases and intercepted UFOs.

Laurence called me a bit later that day, asking what I thought of it. By this time I'd got to grips with the basics of it. "It's good," I told him distractedly, still unsure of exactly how good it might be, and almost subconsciously planning new additions to my fledgling base and thinking about recruiting new members of my squad as I spoke to him on the phone. By the end of day three, I was the one calling Laurence explaining to him that I had what appeared to be an all-time classic on my hands, and telling him he might want to make the review a little bigger (which he did). By this time I was hopelessly lost in the incredible world of *UFO: Enemy Unknown*.

While it was a tactical combat game, there was so much more to it that it would be criminal to describe it in such simplistic terms. First there was the huge myriad of weapons, items and equipment to be found, researched and later used by your squad. Then there was the base-building and resource management, the ship combat, and the mind-boggling amount of information to be found in the UFOpaedia (which chronicled all your discoveries and gave in-depth information on everything you found as you went through the game). It all came together as the most addictive and hugely engrossing game I had ever played on PC. It was yet to change the world, but it had already changed mine.
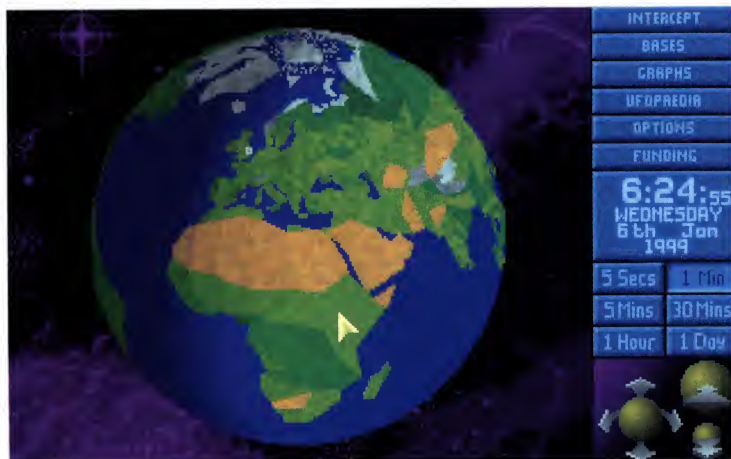
THE RAW BEGINNINGS...

X-Com was the brainchild of Julian and Nick Gollop, and while the game itself appeared unannounced and with a very small profile launch, the Gollop brothers themselves had already accumulated a steady if modest track record in the games industry.

"When I left school I worked for a small company called Red Shift," says Julian, recalling the early days. "We produced Time Lords, Islandia, Nebula and Rebelstar Raiders, which was my first squad-based tactical game and the original precursor to X-Com. Then I created Chaos for Games Workshop, and Rebelstar 1 and 2 for Mirrorsoft. I set up my own company, Target Games to work on Laser Squad, a new tactical squad game. This is where Nick comes in."

As Nick elaborates: "I got my Economics degree from Liverpool but really couldn't think of anything useful to do with it. Julian needed help on Laser Squad, so he gave me the C64 version to do. 'It's easy,' he said, 'just convert my Z80 code to 6502.' Sure, it had few instructions to learn, but it wasn't exactly a walk in the park."

And so the duo were set to move on to greater things which would eventually culminate in the making of X-Com. However, contrary to popular belief, Laser Squad, their own title, was not the overriding influence that inspired their biggest hit. As Julian explains: "I think the biggest influence, apart from our earlier games, was Civilization. Judging by the amount of time Nick devoted to 'researching' it while we were working on UFO, it seemed to be quite important."

"Well," Nick replies, "You can hardly blame me. It was the ultimate strategy game, and we wanted to create something as grand and magnificent." But the goal was never to produce a straight rip-off of the almighty Civ. "We weren't trying to match Civ, but we wanted to combine a strategic meta-game with a new tactical combat system."

It seems ironic then, that when the Gollops first approached MicroProse they were pitching their new game as Laser Squad 2. Nick admits he didn't fancy their chances of clinching a deal at the time: "I was working on the LS2 demo while Julian was doing some database programming to fund the development. I was sceptical about taking it to MicroProse, and it was the third company we visited. Although it had a 3D isometric display similar to what we eventually used in UFO, I didn't think it compared with Civ, so I thought MicroProse would reject it."

Julian, however, was persistent: "I persuaded Nick that we should show it to MicroProse because they were the premier strategy games publisher at the time," he says. "We talked to Pete Moreland, the head of development, and he liked the demo but wanted something more. He wanted a 'bigger' game with a more Earth-based theme, such as a UFO invasion. We went away and came back to MicroProse with the basic concept for an internationally funded UFO research and combat organisation. They liked it enough to contract us to make the game, using the resources of MicroProse's art and sound departments.'

GAME ON

And so work began on the game that was eventually to be released in the UK under the title UFO: Enemy Unknown, although it was known across the water as X-Com – a title that was to stick with the series for future releases. This was a huge undertaking for the Gollops, who had previously worked on much smaller projects with their own company. Although X-Com was being produced with MicroProse in tow as a safety net, the brothers were left largely to their own devices, apparently due to the fact that MicroProse had troubles of their own at the time. This is perhaps the single biggest reason X-Com became the incredible game that it was. Too often we see very talented designers and programmers being 'steered in the right direction' by the marketing departments of big publishers, and initially promising concepts are lost completely in the search for the next big thing (usually a direct rip-off of whatever the current big thing is). For the Gollops, there was no real intrusion from MicroProse for most of the making of

"I would say that Sid Meier had a massive influence"

JULIAN GOLLOP
DESIGNER, X-COM
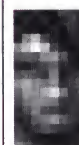
Researching alien corpses and new technology opened up some devastating weaponry later on.

X-Com, and aside from the art people from MicroProse who painted their own personality on the project, the only other real influence on the game is a rather unexpected one. As Julian confides: "I would say Sid Meier had a massive influence. Although he wasn't part of the team, I believe he was with us in spirit."

YOU GOT THE LOOK

It wasn't just the hopelessly addictive gameplay that made *X-Com* the game it was. Visually, it was very striking and oozed character. From the design and animation of the squad units to the distinct look and feel of both *X-Com* and alien items and equipment, right through to the realistic look and feel of the cities during ground-based invasions – everything about the game felt unique and captivating. It was partially reminiscent of early strategy game success stories on consoles, such as *Shadowrun* for the SNES, but it also hinted strongly at *Laser Squad* itself, particularly the ground-based tactical shoot-outs. The Gollops put the visually arresting and atmospheric delivery of the game's artwork down to one man.

"John Reitze, the lead artist, would just create great stuff," says Julian, "and then we would figure out how to use it in the game. I don't think I really gave him any explicit instructions about style, he just did things the way he wanted. I think it certainly helped the game's success, because it was a fairly visual game with
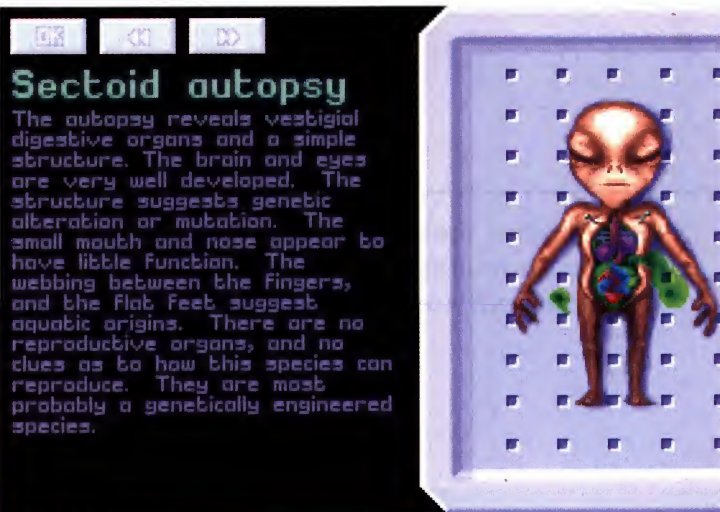
Underneath the tactical action lay in-depth resource management.

some intricate animation for all the characters. John was quite clearly influenced by manga. He was responsible for the great intro movie. It had real style, which is something generally lacking in most intros. He also played a large part in the design of the aliens. MicroProse argued that the alien species I originally specified were a bit boring, something I had to concede. I had based them too closely on established UFO folklore, which wasn't particularly imaginative. Fortunately John Reitze created a whole range of concepts for different aliens and, together with the MicroProse designers, we picked the best ones. I then had to fit the story to the aliens that John had designed, but it worked out pretty well. '

Incredibly, despite the obvious qualities *X-Com* displayed even early in its development, the game almost never made it to the huge army of fans who took it to their hearts upon release. MicroProse was having financial difficulties and was forced to cut spending, and when Spectrum Holobyte took over control of the company, a new threat emerged to the game's development. One of the 'bigwigs' at Spectrum Holobyte decided to do a clear-out of current projects, and the one he took particular umbrage to was *X-Com*. By that time the game had entered the testing and QA cycle. The QA departments at MicroProse were very vocal in their admiration for *X-Com*, claiming it had huge potential, and this is what ultimately saved the day for the Gollop brothers. Given that the current videogames' climate is one in which QA people and games testers come under heavy fire when games are rush-released, (*Ultima Ascension* being a case in point), it's heartening to hear the other side of the coin, where the same people can make a huge difference in making a case for the continued development of a very promising title.

THE ONES THAT GOT AWAY

Although the Gollop brothers maintain that the finished *X-Com* was very close to the original design, there were inevitably some elements that were planned that never made it into the final game. Julian gives an example: "MicroProse told us to remove the 'conspiracy' aspects from the

"We scrapped the Men in Black, who were part of the original design"

JULIAN GOLLOP
DESIGNER, X-COM

Gunning down UFOs was a simple affair.

game because it conflicted with an internal game in development (which never saw the light of day). This meant we had to scrap the Men In Black, who were part of the original design. The idea was that the MIB were alien hybrid agents working with governments that had been corrupted by alien contact. There was even some nice artwork for the MIB which had to be junked. It's a shame they had to go, but I don't think the game suffered too much."

There were also elements that never saw the light of day which, in hindsight, was no bad thing, as Nick attests: 'I was glad we scrapped the original interception sequence. This part of the game involved the resolution of vehicle combat against UFOs. Originally we had a crude first-person view from inside the interceptor. As the UFO came into range you could deploy either of the two weapons systems and watch the results. It looked like it wanted to be a flight sim, and it didn't fit in with the strategy side of the game."

Conversely, some things made it in which shouldn't have. "There was an embarrassing bug with the difficulty level," says Julian. "No matter what difficulty level the player selected, it was always set to the easiest setting once the player saved the game. Nobody really noticed because the game had in-built balancing factors. We certainly didn't find out about it until well after the game was released."
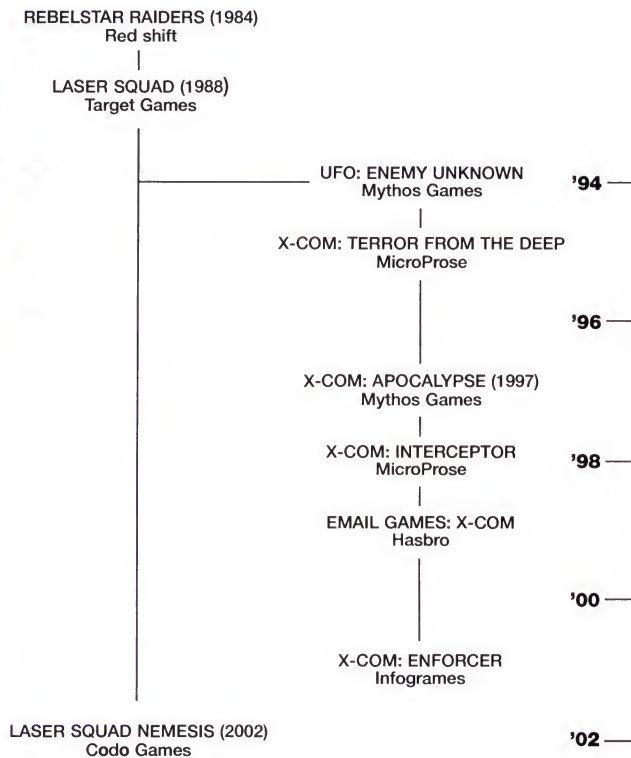
Despite these hiccups, and regardless of the details of what was left out and what stayed in, it was clearly evident that the finished product delivered on just about every level. It wasn't long before X-Com was the word on every strategy gamer's lips. While you could not describe X-Com as one of the most influential games of all time, you could certainly accurately describe it as one of the most unique, so although it may not have changed the world in the way that a game like Ultima Underworld did through spawning many clones, it most certainly changed the world in terms of the huge impact it had on strategy gamers. The perception of what made a 'good' strategy game changed completely when X-Com arrived on the scene. It was unique then, and it remains unique even today. There hasn't been a game since that even attempted to combine all the elements of the X-Com experience, and even the sequel, Terror Of The Deep, was nothing more than an underwater rip-off of the original, which emerged when MicroProse took the sequel out of the Gollops' hands. The third instalment, X-Com Apocalypse, was a genuine attempt by the Gollops to build on the original, but by that time MicroProse were too involved and the Gollops felt the ultimate design plan was taken out of their hands. The original X-Com has never been bettered, and my money is soundly on the fact that it never will be. PCZ

THE X-COM FAMILY TREE

The Gollops only worked on two X-Com games directly (UFO and Apocalypse), but despite those promising beginnings, the X-Com series has suffered a slow and lingering death. The most promising non-Gollop games (X-Com: Genesis and X-Com: Alliance), were both canned.

REBELSTAR RAIDERS (1984)
Red shift

LASER SQUAD (1988)
Target Games

UFO: ENEMY UNKNOWN
Mythos Games   '94

X-COM: TERROR FROM THE DEEP
MicroProse

'96

X-COM: APOCALYPSE (1997)
Mythos Games

X-COM: INTERCEPTOR   '98
MicroProse

EMAIL GAMES: X-COM
Hasbro

'00

X-COM: ENFORCER
Infogrames

LASER SQUAD NEMESIS (2002)
Codo Games   '02

The '50s feel of the artwork belied a very intricate game mechanic. But X-Com was fun as well as complex.

THE FUTURE: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?
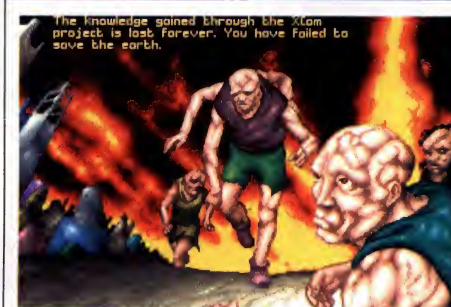
Sadly, no more X-Com games are forthcoming.

The X-Com series seemed to have died a death with the release of X-Com: Enforcer, a fairly average first-person shooter that had little to do with the roots of the original game. With X-Com: Alliance and X-Com: Genesis both having been canned, we can now only look to Infogrames for hope of resurrecting the X-Com series, since they now own the licence. Rumour has it that Firaxis may be given control of the X-Com licence, and that would be an ironic twist indeed. To see Sid Meier involved with the series that came into being through his own inspiration would be a fine thing, and our hopes are high that this rumour will prove to be true. Watch this space.

COMMENT

Ugly, drab and a waste of space. But enough about *James Lyon*. Is the beige case really the reason why console games always miss on the PC?

"The PC needs to change and lose the arcade-hostile image it's carried for so long"

ONE OF THE main concerns about the Xbox is that it will take serious gamers away from the PC. It's also feared that it will drastically reduce the output of all games that don't fall under the narrow remit of instant thrills and mindlessly repetitive tasks. Which is plainly ridiculous. If anything, it's the opposite that needs to be addressed – it's the PC that needs to look seriously at its attitude when it comes to good old arcade entertainment. Yes, the PC can do MAME and countless other emulators. Yes, it can nobble any current console it likes at the technology game when it puts in the effort. What it can't do, though, is bask the player in a pleasant enough atmosphere so that its accomplishments are fully appreciated.

Maybe it just comes down to the difference between being sprawled out on a comfy sofa and hunching uncomfortably in an office surplus swivel chair that numbs all feeling in the arse after 20 seconds of sitting down – but there's got to be more to it than that.

While it's true that deep down the same title on a different format is relatively identical play-wise, underneath there's a world of difference. It's been said before, but the lack of success of classic games like *Super Mario 64* or *GoldenEye* would be inevitable if released solely on PC. In the real world, *Metal Gear Solid*, often pronounced as a phenomenon on the PlayStation, died a comparative death on the PC despite a more than adequate conversion. Easy-to-learn but difficult-to-master puzzle games like *Mr Driller* or *Puzzle Bobble* – despite bearing almost no discrepancies in the design department – don't sell well on PC. They're 'just console games'. They just aren't the types of game people think should work on the PC. They don't take the game into account, but the platform it's working on.

It's not all bad news, though. We've somehow made the PC the platform of choice for the first-person shooter thanks to the mouse and keyboard. But newly designed joypads and console-specific peripherals might soon put paid to that. Which is why the PC needs to change and lose the arcade-hostile image it's been carrying for so long. The irony is, though, that it's something we've had the opportunity to do for quite some time now.

Whatever happened to the laptop? I mean, look at that great hulking ugly beige case sucking up much more desk space than it's worth. Then take a butcher's at an improbably tiny laptop, its innards neatly compacted into a handy portable case, the latest models of which can easily outperform the Xbox in terms of technology and disk space. Why, then, are we still putting up with the huge, beige eyesores?

I'm not saying everyone should buy a laptop – it's naturally impractical for a broad range of gaming as it is. What I am suggesting is that its design aesthetic should become the new standard for gamers who consider the PC a dedicated games machine that does a bit of word processing – instead of the other way around. Which is why we should lobby for changes like TFT monitors, lightweight, miniature cases, sleek curves and – please, just for once – a decent standard of joypad that actually looks like it's had some love put into its design.

What I'm suggesting might be a supremely stupid solution to a deeply ingrained problem. But if Apple can see the value in making its computers sleek and desirable, if BMW can market the decades-old Mini as a must-have designer car, or Darius can look less of a nonce by shaving off his facial hair, then shouldn't the PC be doing something similar to drum up some eagerness and enthusiasm in what is a highly competitive games market? Then maybe the anathema that seems to have inexplicably built up around arcade-style games that try to push themselves on to the PC can clear a little, and we can all expect conversions of *Mario Sunshine* or *Zelda* or *Jak And Daxter* with open arms. Excellent. That's that mystery solved. Now to work on that perpetual motion machine... **PCZ**

COMING NEXT ISSUE...

REVIEW AND DEMO
COUNTER-STRIKE:
CONDITION ZERO
GO, GO, GO...
Read the world's first review of the single-player sequel only in next month's PC Zone

FOR YOU
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